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# Culture Wars



**The Weber Thesis Revisited:  
Capitalism and Looting**

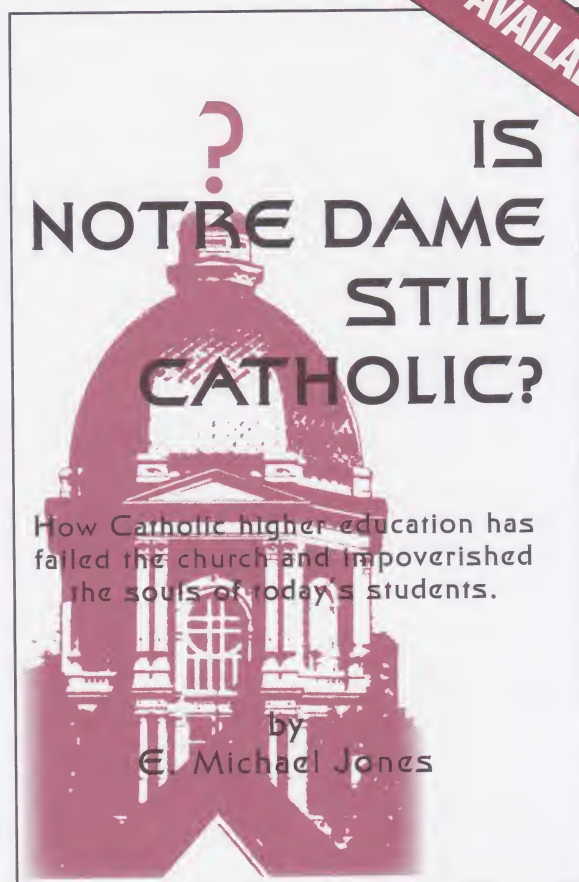


# The Updated 25th anniversary Edition of the Book that Started it All

On March 25, 2009, Notre Dame was embroiled in the biggest controversy to hit the campus since the performance of The Vagina Monologues. A few days earlier, Notre Dame president John Jenkins, CSC had announced that the university planned to give President Barack Obama an honorary doctorate. Within hours of the announcement a storm of protest erupted which showed no sign of dying down any time soon. Citing the statement of the US Catholic Bishops in 2004, "The Catholic community and Catholic institutions should not honor those who act in defiance of our fundamental moral principles. They should not be given awards, honors or platforms which would suggest support for their actions" the ordinary of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, John M. D'Arcy announced that, for the first time in 25 years, he would not be attending graduation ceremonies at Notre Dame, because "President Obama has recently affirmed, and has now placed in public policy, his long stated unwillingness to hold human life as sacred."

*By April, 2009 over 250,000 people had signed a petition condemning Notre Dame's actions, and Bishop Thomas J. Olmstead of the Phoenix, Arizona diocese joined with his colleague Bishop D'Arcy in denouncing Jenkins' decision, calling the decision to honor President Obama a "public act of disobedience" and a "grave mistake."*

Beginning in June 1984 and continuing for the next 25 years, Fidelity Magazine and then Culture Wars published a series of articles on Notre Dame that rocked the Catholic World. Beginning with a survey of the theology department, Those articles described a sordid web of intrigue which included blackmail and murder and which amounts to the best description of the trajectory that began when Father Hesburgh stole Notre Dame from the Catholic Church in 1967. Written by one of the most acute observers of the contemporary Catholic scene and compiled over a quarter of a Century, these articles tell the compelling story of the demise of Catholic education in America.



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# Culture Wars

*"No social progress outside the moral order."*



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Business Manager

Ruth P. Jones

Typesetting and Layout

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# LETTERS

## BLIND TO THE TRUTH

This letter is in response to the letter by Lawrence J. Dickson published in your magazine for the December, 2009 issue. Lawrence Dickson's desire to make a point, as erroneous as it is, should not blind him to the truth.

The justification for destroying the "pursuer" is not one based on truth, but is based on the principle of being able to do whatever one wants. Judaism of today rejects truth because it rejects Christ. Perhaps one of the best places that we can observe this situation is in Mark 12:28-33. As you may recall, the Jewish elders, chief priests, and scribes asked Jesus "By what authority are you doing these things?" (that is, the miracles He worked). Jesus responded with a question: "I shall ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. Was John's baptism of heavenly or of human origin?" Now here's the really interesting part: the Jews "discussed this among themselves and said If we say of heavenly origin, he will say, Why did you not believe him? But shall we say of human origin?—They feared the crowd." In other words, instead of seeking and speaking truth, the Jewish leaders thought foremost of what others would think of them; they engaged in empty discussions or debate, and they ultimately gave a political answer to the Incarnate Truth. They rejected Truth when they refused to answer Him correctly even though they knew the truth.

The idea of the pursuer means whatever anyone wants it to mean to justify one's actions. If Mr. Dickson accepts the pursuer prin-

ciple in his life, then he will undoubtedly engage in whatever he wants and feel good about it just like the Jews. However, in the examples that Mr. Dickson provides, it appears that he is trying to articulate a Roman Catholic position.

Roman Catholicism is founded on and dedicated to the Truth. That means that there are principles of order that are to guide our conduct and thoughts because these principles properly orient us to doing the will of God and hence to achieving our nature, our supposed final end, which is union with Him.

One of the principles that Catholicism espouses is what is called the Principle of Double Effect. While I believe that Catholics United for the Faith has largely lost its way and its energy, it did provide a good definition of the Principle in its "Faith Facts." Here it is:

"The basic moral principle that we follow is to pursue and do good, and avoid that which is evil or bad (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1732, 1955). The principle of double effect is an ethical formula that enables someone to evaluate the moral dimensions of complicated moral issues that may involve consequences or side effects which are both positive and negative, good and bad. This principle may be employed when one is considering an action that is morally good, yet the action involves one or more unintended bad consequences. Because these consequences are side effects, and not directly willed, the choice that brings them about is morally acceptable." For the principle of double effect to apply to an action thereby rendering it morally ac-

ceptable, the following guidelines must be met: "[1] the intended act must be good in itself. The intended act may not be morally evil. [2] The good effect of the act must be that which is directly intended by the one who carries out the act. The bad effect that results from the act may be foreseen by the agent but must be unintended. [3] The good effect must not be brought about by using morally evil means. [4] The good effect must be of equal or greater proportion to any evil effect which would result. [5] Acts that have morally negative effects are permissible only when truly necessary, i.e., where there are no other means by which the good may be obtained."

This reasoning applies whether one is faced with an attacker or a pending accident or a tubal pregnancy.

Fr. Tad Pacholczyk, an icon of sorts these days for the pro-life movement due to his work in explaining the Church's position on embryonic stem-cell research, presents in an article entitled "When pregnancy goes awry" an example of the operation of the principle of double effect with the situation involving an "ectopic" ("out of place") pregnancy. He writes that there are three procedures that are available to deal with such a situation where a growing embryo is lodged in the fallopian tubes and poses a serious threat to the life of the mother. Two of these procedures are morally impermissible and the third is acceptable.

The first morally impermissible procedure involves the use of the drug methotrexate which targets the embryo, particularly the placenta cells, and causes these cells to stop growing thereby killing the



embryo. The methotrexate is a direct attack on the embryo, just like abortion, and is morally impermissible.

The second morally impermissible procedure involves "cutting along the length of the fallopian tube where the child is embedded" and then "scooping out" the living child who then dies. This procedure, while keeping the tube intact, directly causes the death of the child, and is morally unacceptable.

The third, and only morally acceptable procedure, involves removal of the entire section of the fallopian tube where the unborn child is stuck. Fr. Pacholczyk explains "Although this results in reduced fertility for the woman, the section of tube around the growing child has clearly become pathological, and constitutes a mounting threat with time. The threat is addressed by removal of the tube, with the secondary, and unintended, effect that the child within will then die." The intention here is to the good effect (removing the damaged tissue) while tolerating the bad effect (loss of the child) and the child is not directly targeted nor is the death of the child the reason for the cure.

I hope that this helps Mr. Dickson to properly think about and correctly decide on the moral course of action when he is faced with an insane man attacking his wife or daughter, or someone falling towards his family from a great height, or a tubal pregnancy by his daughter or wife.

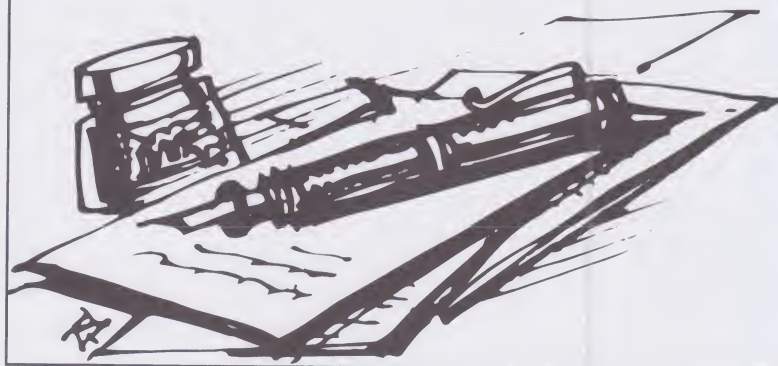
Abortion is from the Jews for the reasons contained in my article in the October, 2009 issue. The Jews have neither a concept of natural law, nor have they Logos or Christ,

so error such as abortion can be justified as some good. This, coupled with the fact that the Jews are the most powerful ethnic group in the United States, if not most of the world, makes it likely, and logical, that their value system or religion will be imposed on the rest of us, or at least it will come to be the basis of social norms and mores. So, yes, abortion is from the Jews—this is a statement of fact even if a lot of non-Jews cooperated in bringing it about. I submit that if pro-lifers really wanted to end abortion, they would first seek the conversion of Jews to Roman Catholicism.

And, my article was not meant to "score points against the Jews." It is meant to speak truth and Mr. Dickson's letter provides for yet another opportunity to preach the Gospel: Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Promised Messiah. No one can go to the Father except through Him. I call on all Jews, Protestants, and Muslims, but especially Jews, to see Him for Who He Is and to accept Him. Convert to the Roman Catholic Faith, find that for which you have been seeking, and save your souls.

David A. Wemhoff  
South Bend, Indiana

*Culture Wars* welcomes letters to the editor. Preference will be given to letters which deal with topics discussed in the magazine. Letters should ideally be limited to one single-spaced page, but we know how difficult it is to follow ideals in this world. Letters can be sent by mail to *Culture Wars*, 206 Marquette Ave., South Bend, IN 46617; by fax to 219-289-1461; or by electronic mail to [Jones@CultureWars.com](mailto:Jones@CultureWars.com).





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## HEART- RENDING PICTURE

In your new December issue of *Culture Wars* there is a picture in James Bruen's article "Killer Moms" of a mother in uniform parting from her child. It is one of the most heart- rending pictures I've ever seen. How well it emphasizes the madness, stupidity and futility of war and misguided values!

Gordon Badgerow  
Sparta, Michigan

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## BAD MONEY

Recent discussion of Gresham's Law of currency in the December 2009 issue of the *Culture Wars*, includes comments on Gresham's Law which tells us that "bad money drives out good" should also be interpreted as saying that "cheap money drives out expensive money" according to the author W. Patrick Cunningham in his article on "Devouring Our Young: Teen Ministry and the Politics of Discontinuity." I would like to call attention to the historic background of Gresham's Law.

The protracted monetary crisis in early 16th century Poland was caused by flooding the country with debased Polish coins minted fraudulently by the Hohenzollerns of Berlin, who thereby destabilized the economy of Poland and damaged the Vistula wheat trade. Acting as Poland's finance minister Nicolaus Copernicus described the necessary monetary reform in his book and while working with the Polish Sejm, he established in 1526 a new currency unit named the "zloty." Thus, the zloty became

a basic unit of the monetary system in Poland.

Copernicus published in Latin his book on monetary reform early in 1526 under the title, *Monetae Cudende Ratio*, in which, for the first time in history, he stated the law of currency that "bad money drives the good money out of circulation." At that time Thomas Gresham (1519-1579) was seven years old.

The Sejm immediately passed into law The Act of Monetary Reform of 1526. The currency reform was adopted by Prussia in 1528 because Prussia was then a fief of Poland after Albrecht von Hohenzollern paid on his knees the first act of homage in the market of Kraków in 1525 and recognized the control of the Polish king over Prussia. It was the first pact in Europe torn by religious conflicts, between a Catholic king and a Protestant vassal duke.

Economics were Copernicus' family tradition. His father Nicolaus Copernicus Sr. registered in Cracov as a copper wholesaler for trade with Gdansk. In 1454 Nicolaus Copernicus Sr. served the acting chancellor of Poland, Zbigniew Cardinal Olesnicki, as an envoy to the Prussian Estates to negotiate the unification of Prussia with Poland. In order to perform his duties, Nicolaus Copernicus Sr moved in 1458 from Cracov to Torun closer to Prussia and there in 1473 was born Nicolaus Copernicus Jr who became the father of modern astronomy after he discovered (about 1504) that the earth rotates daily on its axis and with other planets it is in orbit around the Sun.

The copernican Calendar was astronomically correct and was accu-

rate within two minutes per year. It solved the problem of celebrating Easter at the correct time, and it was used despite attacks by John Calvin and Martin Luther, who hanged and burned Copernicus in effigy in Magdeburg and called him that "Damned Polack Astronomer."

The Hohenzollerns paid homage to the kings of Poland for over a century. King of Poland founded the University of Koenigsberg in 1544. The Hohenzollerns of Berlin were able to take advantage of the panic of Jewish bankers in Poland, after the Cossack's rebellion and horrible pogroms of 1648 in the Ukraine. These bankers feared the repercussions that would lead to eviction from Poland of all Jews, especially the money lenders, the way it happen previously in Spain.

The Hohenzollerns profited from the transfer of commercial capital to Berlin from Poland by Jewish bankers. In 1701 they were able to proclaim the Kingdom of Prussia, with its capital in Berlin. When the Austro-Prussian (1740-1749) war was fought for possession of Silesia and bankrupted the Berlin government, it started again to flood Poland with bogus money to salvage its finances. At that time the Prussians stole from Leipzig the dies to mint Polish zlotys and used Jewish minters to produce the bogus money. Berlin continued to act as an international parasite and on three occasions proposed schemes for dismembering the Polish Nobles Republic, starting in 1656 then in 1720 and in 1733.

After Berlin was burned down by the Russians in 1760, Russian minister Alexis Bestuzhev-Riumin tried to destroy the new Kingdom of Prussia in order to prevent it from



acquiring the means to dominate the 350 independent German principalities and form a new German Reich with its capital in Berlin, which would have meant the modern unification of Germany for the first time in history. Bestuzhev proposed an exchange in which Russia would acquire parts of Podolia or Belorus, while Poland would acquire Silesia and East Prussia, which would be populated, especially in the region of Mazurian Lakes by Mazurs, by colonists from Mazovia in Poland. The proposal failed because Polish citizens of the Noble Republic did not want to become subjects of the Tsar of Russia.

The miracle of Prussian history occurred, when a German woman born in Stettin became Catherine II of Russia and successfully conspired in bringing about the assassination of her husband Peter III (1728-1762). On July 9, 1762 she conducted a *coup d'état* which put her in power in St. Petersburg. The same year Berlin initiated partitions of Poland, after 65 years of "Saxon Night" (1699-1764) as the union of Poland with Saxony is known. It was the most dismal period in the history of Poland. The Kingdom of Prussia was saved from destruction and Berlin was able to provoke a series of Polish-Russian wars; each war gave Berlin a chance for robbery of Polish land by annexation. Thus, one could add that the Poles saved the Kingdom of Prussia from final liquidation, after 244 years of its creation in 1701.

The partitions of Poland in 1762-1795 allowed the Kingdom of Prussia to acquire as much land as was the combined area of the 350 other German independent

principalities at the time. Thus, the annexation of Polish provinces was the key to Berlin's domination over all of Germany.

Similarly, as it happened with the Copernican law of currency, which the British call "Gresham's Law," so today one reads in British books fraudulent statements about World War II in which it is falsely stated that the British broke the German military code Enigma. The history of Enigma and of perennial bad money problems now called the Gresham Law relate to the usurpation by the English of the work of Copernicus and Polish cryptologists.

Iwo Cyprian Pogonowski  
WWW.pogonowski.com

## TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE

The controversy between Simon Goldhill and Israel Shamir in the December 2009 issue of *Culture Wars* over whether there were any prostitutes in ancient Greek, Latin, and Biblical cultures before capitalism, ignores the testimony of Scripture: "the love of money is the root of evil." Before what is known as capitalism there was the love of money. And before that there were prostitutes or harlots, as can be seen in Genesis 38, where Tamar plays the harlot with Judah. There was no money as a substitute for goods and services, but for the service of the harlot, Judah promised the good of the kid taken from the flock.

As near as I can recall, the first to identify Mary Magdalene with the woman who washed Jesus' feet with her tears (Luke 7:36-50, 8:2) was Pope Gregory I. Despite the statement that the Risen Christ ap-

peared first to Mary Magdalen (Mark 16:9), St. Gregory Palamas attempted to reconcile the four evangelists and said that the "other Mary" (Matthew 28: 1-10) was the virgin mother of our Lord, and she was the first. Mary Magdalen supposes the risen Jesus to be a gardener, and Jesus said to her, "Touch me not" (John 20:1-18), but the "other Mary" met the risen Jesus and fell down at his feet and worshiped him (Matthew 28:9).

Charles Caldwell  
Naples, Florida

## HATRED OF MAMMON

In *Culture Wars* 2009 you gave Ken Freeland, the Christian Socialist, the opportunity to develop his economic hypothesis. In the November issue there was a very interesting exchange between Michael McClain and Israel Shamir about the fact that Shamir "could not find a line of thought behind" McClain's letter, and that's why he simply allowed his gifted pen to run freely on the page. But I think Mr. McClain had some sensible thoughts, although expressed rather emotionally. Israel Shamir has written numberless articles, and in some of them he also gives into his weaknesses.

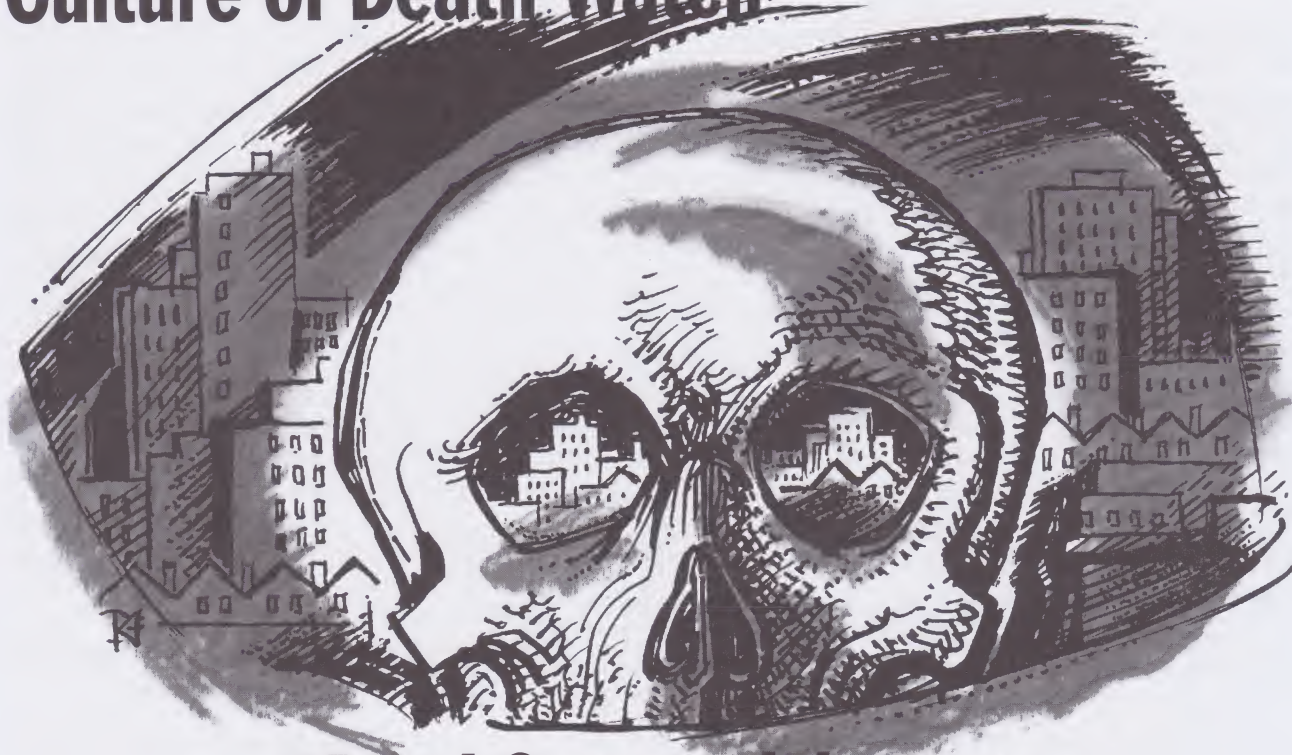
But actually Michael McClain challenged Shamir to develop his claim, "if the Soviet Union had been left alone the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian Communism would have united . . . in mutual hatred of Mammon."

Israel Shamir had expressed this publicly and this opinion had surprised many people, not only

(continued on p. 17)



# Culture of Death Watch



## Moral Squeamishness: A Magazine is Born

### I AMORAL STANDPOINT

England is ill served by her media. She is not unique in this, nor in the fact that her magazines, with few exceptions, are overwhelmingly trivial, dull and incurious. I do not refer to the mass market magazines, that glut of pornography, celebrity, and prurience, or the newspapers, which, when not imitating the mags, give space to political correspondents who don't appear to have any meaningful beliefs, and who are practically indistinguishable from one another.

It is the serious magazine market that is almost empty in England. The US, for all its faults, does have some serious magazines. Even *First Things*, for all its unfortunate politics, publishes important and

thought-provoking articles. And there are others out there: *The American Conservative*, *Culture Wars* and *Chronicles* for starters.

There are no equivalents in England. Of the few supposedly serious magazines *The Spectator* has become increasingly trivial, and the newer magazine *Prospect* is a pretentious atheist rag which engages more in sneering than in argument (AC Grayling is a regular contributor).

Into this barren landscape a new magazine has come. Edited by a well-educated Catholic (Daniel Johnson) and promising to cut through all of the above (and defend Western values), *Standpoint* is, one might have hoped, a much needed counterblast against the increasingly decadent and anti-intel-

lectual culture of this troubled isle.

England is not short of good minds and good writers. Many do not get a chance to address a mainstream audience, so the emergence of a new magazine is not a minor event. The magazine was given a lavish launch party at London's Wallace Collection gallery. Huge quantities of champagne were quaffed by many prominent figures of the media and literary worlds. Paul Johnson, Daniel's famous father, was conspicuous and a good time was had by all. But who was paying for all this, and indeed for the magazine itself? And why?

The major financial backer of the magazine is one Alan Bekhor, a prominent Zionist and former London metal-trader who is now



building a shipping empire. The staff of the magazine is largely Jewish and, one supposes, not of the anti-Zionist or paleo-conservative persuasion (if they are they have my sympathy).

Paul Johnson, who appears to be something of a godfather for the magazine, will be known to most readers as a prolific author and bestselling historian. So well-known is he in certain circles that in 2006 he received the Medal of Freedom in the US. Jewish paleoconservative Paul Gottfried used the occasion to reflect:

Paul Johnson should be known as a British journalist who writes long historical surveys aimed at pleasing the usual suspects. Johnson, of course, has many unpleasant things to say about the German people in any time period, and he assails those Arabs who challenge the right of Israelis to occupy territory they had once held. His history of the Jews, which could have been written by John Podhoretz—provided that John could put together enough sentences sequentially—brought Johnson the favor of “our crowd” and their pampered progeny. Since then the obliging Brit has made a new career writing for neocon publications, and he does so more often than I would care to notice.

Gottfried is right. Johnson's *History of the Jews* is a travesty. The book's inherent anti-Christian bias and persistent, though not total, refusal to mention Jewish as opposed to Christian wrongdoing is there for all to see. Small wonder that the Catholic writer Piers Paul Read was to state, in reviewing the

*History of the Jews* together with Johnson's slipshod *History of Christianity*, “Indeed, reading the two histories together, one gets the impression that he would rather have been born a Jew than a Christian because the Jews were the ‘first to rationalize the unknown’ and are the ‘pilot project of the human race.’” Read goes on to enumerate a few of Johnson's oversimplifications and outright falsehoods. Two eminent Jewish historians, Elliott Horowitz and Israel Yuval, have recently decried the damage done to Jewish historiography by historians like Johnson. It would seem that they think philosemites, of whom Johnson is a conspicuous example, are not true friends either of the Jews or of scholarship.

As if that weren't bad enough from this Christian historian, when it comes to Israel Johnson takes misrepresentation to new heights. Just one example: he describes the massacre at Sabra and Chatila in Lebanon as “a slaughter of Moslem refugees, by Christian Falangist Arabs. . . This episode was

in the context of Johnson's measured comments about the 1982 invasion of Lebanon by Israel (“Such Israeli exercises in the right to self-defense were sometimes misjudged or ill executed,” Johnson tells us).

Contrast Johnson's account with the words of the unimpeachable Zeev Maoz, Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Davis and former director of the M.A. Program at the Israeli Defense Force's National Defense College. Maoz tells us that “Sharon explained the need to enter the refugee camps in order to pull out the suspected PLO guerrillas but also the need to get the Phalanges involved in the fighting. . . The Phalange militias entered the refugee camps and spent nearly three days there. When they left the camps some eight hundred men, women and children were left dead in the streets. The massacre took place under the eyes of the IDF commanders who had been stationed on the roofs overlooking the camps. . .”

**Into this barren landscape a new magazine has come.**

skillfully exploited by Arab and Soviet propagandists and presented in the Western media as an Israeli responsibility. . . The Israelis wisely ordered an independent judicial inquiry which established the facts and placed some blame on the Israeli Minister of Defense, Ariel Sharon, for not having foreseen and prevented the killings.” All this

Paul Johnson is not, of course, *Standpoint*, although he is a hugely influential “conservative” figure in the States. He is, however, the father of the editor and a supporter of the magazine. That said, it is surely wrong to judge the son and his magazine by the father's writings. Gottfried, in discussing Paul, turns his focus to Daniel, writing:





The mention of Paul Johnson... made me think of his son Daniel, another kept journalist, who is about to launch, with Miriam Gross, a former assistant to Melvin Lasky at *Encounter*, a British equivalent of the *Weekly Standard*. . . I wish his enterprise every possible success, on the grounds that the British deserve this American import, for having pushed us into World War One. We are now returning the favor belatedly by dumping our latest example of toxic waste onto their newsstands. Besides, the neocons claim to adore the Brits, as they dislike the French and detest the Germans. Why shouldn't they be allowed and even encouraged to put part of their propaganda machine in the British Isles? Perhaps some of our pre-

m i e r neocons can be urged to move across the Atlantic and to devote themselves to Mr. Bekhor's venture full-time.

When I first read this I thought it unduly harsh. I had reason to believe that Daniel was a rather more cautious and careful person than his father. I also had reason to believe that he was,

unlike his father (who has a fixation about the need for the Catholic Church to ordain women), an orthodox Catholic. These things matter. To have an orthodox Catholic at the helm of such an important venture struck me as a cause for celebration. And I had no reason to share Paul Gottfried's cynicism, admire him as I do.

Then I read *Standpoint*.

It is written, though not exclusively, by a motley bunch of anti-Christian neoconservatives who, like Paul Johnson, seem to prize Israel, demonize Muslims and boast of their 'hawkish' approach to the "War on Terror". A quick survey of the magazine finds us in the company of, among others, Melanie Phillips, Julie Burchill, and Emanuele Ottolenghi. There are many more, but let's just look at these to begin with, as an example

of the kind of people *Standpoint* is employing or commissioning. All three of these people are very concerned about both anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. Ottolenghi has been given a regular column. Just as Paul Johnson defends Ariel Sharon from his critics, so too does Mr. Ottolenghi. In a jointly written article with Suzanne Gershowitz for the *Middle East Quarterly* in 2005 Ottolenghi warns:

The growing legitimacy of anti-Zionism has contributed to a resurgence of European anti-Semitism, again often wrapped with and, in many European eyes, legitimized by the caricature of Sharon. Violent anti-Semitic incidents in Europe have risen in proportion to the violence between Israel and the Palestinians, which suggest a relationship between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism.

The article by Ottolenghi and Gershowitz was, unsurprisingly, praised by UK Zionist Melanie Phillips. The article forthrightly asserts a link between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism, a theme that Phillips constantly brings up in her own writings. And both Ottolenghi and Phillips draw attention to the prospect of a "new" anti-Semitism and to surveys showing a rise in this "new" anti-Semitism (in Europe). The Ottolenghi article refers to the *Manifestations of anti-Semitism in the European Union* report to back up its claim of a "new" anti-Semitism (linked with a rising anti-Zionism). Ottolenghi dishonestly whitewashes Sharon's record and then refers (along with his co-author from the American Enterprise Institute) to a report so ludicrous and propagandistic in its as-



sumptions that, as Norman Finkelstein notes: "If virtually any criticism of Israel signals anti-Semitism, the sweep of the new anti-Semites, unsurprisingly, beggars the imagination."

I have yet to see any of Finkelstein's analysis in his book *Beyond Chutzpah* refuted by anyone. What is one to do with such a man? Ottolenghi knows. Here is what he wrote of this awkward customer, one who actually bothers to dig up the background for Ottolenghi's ludicrous claims: "Norman Finkelstein provides a blanket cover to Holocaust deniers."

Got that? The son of Holocaust survivors who has campaigned more than anyone to ensure that Holocaust payments to victims actually get to victims (rather than to Jewish institutions supportive of the "work" of the likes of Ottolenghi) is basically an enabler of Holocaust deniers. One can

Finkelstein's condemnation of those who would deny this tragedy is, of course, well-known too. But, for Ottolenghi, it would seem that any critic of Israel can be smeared in this way. Thus does Ottolenghi honour the Jewish dead of World War II. Perhaps he should meditate on the title of Finkelstein's book on the subject: *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*.

It comes as no surprise that the ubiquitous Melanie Phillips is a fan of Ottolenghi. Not only that, but both were witnesses for the *Report of the All Parliamentary Inquiry Into Anti-Semitism* (September 2006). This Inquiry, led by the Zionist MP (and member of the Henry Jackson Society) Denis MacShane, took evidence from a list of ideological witnesses that produced exactly what one would expect from such a list. According to Finkelstein: "The report defines an anti-Semitic incident as any occa-

backbone for opinion pieces in *Standpoint* and other neoconservative/Zionist operations, it's important that Bekhor's project doesn't let the truth out. After all, neoconservatives and Zionists badly need these kinds of reports. Plus, critics of such reports can be denounced as anti-Semites, not least because there is now no objective test that need be satisfied to qualify for the label.

The whole association of anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism is, of course, a political manoeuvre used by Zionists and neoconservatives as a way of deflecting attention from serious moral questions and ruining opponents where possible. This should come as no surprise, for, as we shall see, when it comes to serious moral questions our *Standpoint* contributors are all at sea. The philosopher Michael Neumann, being rather more concerned with moral philosophy than most, easily sees through this tactic. He tells us:

**"The mention of Paul Johnson. . .made me think of his son Daniel, another kept journalist, who is about to launch. . . a British equivalent of the *Weekly Standard*."**

only assume he has got the dean of Holocaust studies, the late Raul Hilberg, to endorse his work fully, and has also made sure that his acceptance of Hilberg's findings with regard to the systematic mass extermination of Jews during the Second World War is well-known, as part of his enabling project.

sion 'perceived' to be anti-Semitic by the 'Jewish community.' So "anti-Semitic" is the media in Britain that, as far as I could see, the entire mainstream press uncritically covered the report, accepting all of its dire warnings regarding a "new anti-Semitism." Given that such reports form the

Anti-Semitism. . .means hatred of Jews. But here, immediately, we come up against the venerable shell-game of Jewish identity: "Look! We're a religion! No! a race! No! a cultural entity! Sorry—a religion!" When we tire of this game, we get suckered into another: "Anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism!" quickly alternates with "Don't confuse Zionism with Judaism! How dare you, you anti-Semite!" . . .Let's try defining "anti-Semitism" as broadly as any supporter of Israel would ever want: anti-Semitism can be hatred of the Jewish race, or culture, or religion, or hatred of Zionism. Hatred, or dislike, or opposition, or slight unfriendliness. But sup-



porters of Israel won't find this game as much fun as they expect. Inflating the meaning of "anti-Semitism" to include anything politically damaging to Israel is a double-edged sword. It may be handy for smiting your enemies, but the problem is that definitional inflation, like any inflation, cheapens the currency. The more things get to count as anti-Semitic, the less awful anti-Semitism is going to sound. This happens because, while no one can stop you from inflating definitions, you still don't control the facts. . . . Through definitional inflation, some form of anti-Semitism becomes morally obligatory. It gets worse if anti-Zionism is labeled anti-Semitic, because the settlements, even if they do not represent fundamental aspirations of the Jewish people, are an entirely plausible extension of Zionism. To oppose them is indeed to be anti-Zionist, and therefore, by the stretched definition, anti-Semitic. The more anti-Semitism expands to include opposition to Israeli policies, the better it looks. Given the crimes to be laid at the feet of Zionism, there is another simple syllogism: anti-Zionism is a moral obligation, so, if anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism, anti-Semitism is a moral obligation.

Neumann is a secular Jew. What is not mentioned by him is that the vast majority of Jews were either anti-Zionists or non-Zionists when Theodore Herzl was promoting the idea. Are/were they, too, anti-Semites? Presumably the following group of native-born inhabitants of Jerusalem qualify as anti-Semites

for proclaiming the following in 1948:

We will not allow ourselves, our wives and our children, to be led to our deaths, God forbid, in the name of Zionist idolatry. It is inconceivable that the impious, the unbelievers, the ignorant, and the irresponsible heretics lead an entire population of hundreds of thousands of Jews, like lambs to the slaughter, God save us, because of their false demented ideas, and that an entire population like an innocent dove, allow them to lead it to be killed.

That a present-day Orthodox Jew like Yakov M. Rabkin can reveal Zionism to be utterly antithetical to his religion must be painful for the *Standpoint* crowd: all the more so because his vision is actually closer to a Christian one than a neoconservative or Zionist view. Rabkin tells us of pious Jews, accused by Zionists of passivity:

Many of them must constantly call upon all their spiritual resources to ward off the temptation to nationalism. To reaffirm their trust in divine mercy, they strive to live Torah life, for Jewish tradition considers that each good deed has an effect on the entire world. . . . Each deed, no matter how minor, will be weighed on the balance of divine justice, for ultimate redemption. "It should not be thought that the inferiority of the nation of Israel among the nations, and its prostration in exile, can be attributed to ill fortune." Rather than seeing the history of the Jews as part of the fatalistic turnings of the wheel of history, tradition af-

firms that the "fate" of the Jews depends only upon heaven's assessment of their deeds. . . . The Jews were exiled from their homeland in an historical accident; Zionism thus proposes to redress what it perceives as an historical injustice in historical, rather than religious terms. . . . For many pious Jews, Zionism appears as an obstacle to redemption of Israel. Rather than relying on "prayer and the plea for mercy," the Zionist pioneers resorted to physical labor and armed struggle.

The Jewish convert Israel Shamir reminds us:

Zionism became poison without the Messiah: not in vain did the Jewish religious scriptures ("the instructions to the soldiers") forbid the gathering of Jews in the Holy Land before the days of the Messiah. The "instructors" knew what we have forgotten: such a gathering, unless by means of accepting the Messiah, would be used by the Antichrist and would poison the world.

So it would seem that those who oppose Zionism and accept the idea of expiatory patient suffering and divine mercy are seen to be in opposition to the messianic way of Zionism and/or neoconservatism — neither of which is too concerned with "moral issues" because, well, we need to get results — and through force if necessary.

Lest the reader think I am assuming too much, I offer you Melanie Phillips, who is sometimes portrayed, not without some justi-



fication, as a morally upright thinker. Here is Ms Phillips on the question of torture: "Torture is always wrong, and corrupts those who employ it. But the moral squeamishness of the west is also the hole in its defences." It is worth noting that Melanie Phillips only recently castigated a fellow panelist on the BBC's show *The Moral Maze* for saying that torture was inherently wrong. She called such a position immoral and endorsed the use of torture in certain circumstances (her endorsement is not new). So it seems that the statement used in the first sentence is not made in good faith. And we know that anyway, because in the next sentence Phillips uses the term "moral squeamishness." What on earth is the term supposed to mean? If it means anything at all it seems to mean a dismissal of the idea of moral absolutes—at least as they apply to "always wrong" choices such as torture.

Phillips supports torture, cluster-bombing, and nuclear strikes and, in practice, rejects traditional just war theory. Apparently, such positions are in line with what she sees as neoconservatism. Truly her messianism has, as with all false messiahs, led her into antinomianism. I would suggest to this confused woman that there is a way out of all this, but fear that I might be accused of "religious" anti-Semitism.

With this background in mind, I looked at the second issue of *Standpoint*. Not content with publishing a series of nakedly neoconservative articles, the magazine took it upon itself to publish a person who not only excuses torture but was reportedly himself

closely involved in the practice (see below). Since that individual is known as a neoconservative we will turn now to examine this ideology and its oft-ignored theological roots.

## NEOCONSERVATISM

What's a neoconservative? As with many political terms, neither its sense nor reference is crystal clear. Let's hear what various knowledgeable people have said from geopolitical and eschatological perspectives. Here is a conversation between George H. Bush Senior and his incurious president son:

George W. Bush: "What's a neocon?" George H. W. Bush: "Do you want names or a description?" "Description." "Well," said the former president of the United States, "I'll give it to you in one word: Israel."

American academics John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt describe neo-conservatism less tersely as

a political ideology with distinct views on both domestic and foreign policy. . . . Most neo-conservatives extol the virtues of American hegemony—and sometimes even the idea of American empire—and they believe US power should be used to encourage the spread of democracy and discourage potential rivals from even trying to compete with the United States. . . . They tend to be skeptical of international institutions (especially the UN, which they regard as both

anti-Israel and as a constraint on America's freedom of action) and wary of many allies (especially the Europeans whom they see as idealistic pacifists free-riding on the *Pax Americana*). . . .neoconservatives believe that military force is an extremely useful tool for shaping the world in ways that will benefit America. . . . Neoconservatism, in short, is an especially hawkish ideology. . . . Virtually all neoconservatives are strongly committed to Israel, a point they emphasize openly and unapologetically. According to Max Boot, a leading neoconservative pundit, supporting Israel is "a key tenet of neoconservatism," a position he attributes to "shared liberal democratic values." . . . In particular, writes [Benjamin] Ginsberg, they embraced Ronald Reagan's "hard-line anti-communism" because they saw it as a "political movement that would guarantee Israel's security." . . . Given their hawkish orientation, it is not surprising that the neo-conservatives tend to ally with the right-wing elements in Israel itself.

According to Professor Claes Ryn of the Catholic University of America, evident in this "ideology" or ideological pattern is a large element of neo-Jacobinism. As well as openly endorsing the need for big government (for example, William Kristol and David Brooks), neoconservatives talk of the need for a "a neo-Reaganite foreign policy of national strength and moral assertiveness abroad." Neoconservative Robert Kagan's words about his fellow Americans are also noted by Ryn: "As good





children of the Enlightenment, Americans believe in human perfectibility. But Americans...also believe...that global security and the liberal order depend on the United States—that 'indispensable nation'—wielding its power."

Ryn says of this ideology, "The neo-Jacobin vision for how to redeem humanity may be less obviously utopian than that of communism. It may strike some as admirably idealistic, as did communism. But the spirit of the two movements is similar, and utopian thinking is utopian thinking, fairly innocuous perhaps if restricted to isolated dreamers and theoreticians but dangerous to the extent that it inspires action in the real world."

Ryn, a man who knows his history as well as his faith, notes, by way of contrast, that,

Christianity has always stressed the imperfect, sinful nature of man and warned against placing too much faith

in man-made political institutions and measures. St. Augustine (354-430) is only one of the earliest and least sanguine of many Christian thinkers over the centuries who would have rejected out of hand the idea that mankind is destined for great progress and political perfection, to say nothing about the possibility of salvation through politics. Although Christianity has stressed that rulers must serve the common good and behave in a humane manner, it has been reluctant to en-

dorse any particular form of government as suited to all peoples and all historical circumstances.

In trying to piece together the different strands of neoconservative ideology it is useful to listen to what the proudly Jewish thinker Benjamin Ginsberg has written. In discussing neoconservatives and their relation to "paleoconservatives" (traditional conservatives like Claes Ryn, Pat Buchanan, Paul Gottfried and Thomas Fleming). Ginsberg observes:

Few neoconservatives attach much moral significance to the issues of abortion or school prayer and pragmatically advocate doing little to concretely advance these causes in order to avoid alienating middle-class suburban voters. Indeed, *many neocons are fond of saying privately that social issues are merely useful*

*bait with which to attract the votes of the riffraff* [my emphasis]. By helpfully reminding conservative Protestants and Catholics of the true character and aims of the Jews (as revealed by the portions of their liturgy they have chosen to overlook in recent years), paleoconservatives can disrupt the improbable alliance between conservative Christians and Jews and bring the former over to their camp. . . . Many neocons were at one time liberal Democrats or, in some cases, even Socialists or Marxists. One major factor that drew them to the right was their attachment to Israel. . . . In the Reaganite right's hard-line anticommunism, commitment to American military strength, and willingness to intervene politically and militarily in the affairs of other nations to promote democratic values (and American interests), neocons found a political movement that would guarantee Israel's security.

Ginsberg, however, seems to think that for paleoconservatives to point out what he has done is somehow anti-Semitic, telling us that "This is why, after a long hiatus, anti-Semitism has once again become a significant phenomenon on the political right. The most noteworthy expression was, of course, Pat Buchanan's charge that the Persian Gulf War was promoted by the Israeli Defense ministry and its 'amen corner' in the United States. . . ."

If Ginsberg is right, then it would seem that social issues such as abortion, which many people have regarded as extremely important, take a back seat for the neocons to foreign policy consider-



ations, especially US support for Israel. And, of course, this ideological pattern is in many ways the antithesis of the notion of the Social Kingship of Christ that those who profess to be followers of Christ are duty-bound to promote. In fact, despite the many Christians who see themselves as neocons or fellow-travelers with neocons, this ideology seems something very far from Christian.

Melanie Phillips certainly thinks so, telling an audience of her fellow-Jews at the Limmud conference:

If the neocons aren't really conservative, they differ even more strikingly from their Christian co-counter revolutionaries. For the neocon view of the world is a demonstrably Jewish view. Christians see

bad. It is this impulse to *tikkun olam* or repair of the world, this belief that the world must not be allowed to fester but can be persuaded to change for the better, that gives the neocons the optimism that so distresses old-style paleoconservatives when the principles are applied to world affairs. For it was the neocon belief that good can prevail over evil, that preemptive strikes against rogue states are justified and that regime change into democracy can transform a terrorist state into a model world citizen, that lay behind the wars against Afghanistan and Iraq.

Phillips makes quite explicit the idea that neocons have a "Jewish view of mankind." She is to be commended for bringing into dis-

anti-Semitism and perhaps he too thought this. Melanie Phillips, however, thought differently, writing of Curtis in her blog: "You obviously can't overestimate the creative imagination of a pukka conspiracy theorist. It's not enough willfully to invent a conspiracy by sinister neocons, aka Jews, in Washington to subvert American foreign policy."

Apparently, only the likes of Melanie are allowed to delve into these esoteric areas. The rest of us will have to make do with whatever exoteric message is given us, and stop imagining things that just aren't true. Perhaps it's easier to live with double standards if one adopts the neoconservative view which, according to Phillips, effectively denies the reality of Original Sin, or at best admits its existence but de-emphasizes it in the name of the belief that "the world... can be persuaded to change for the better," a belief to be contrasted with a robust belief in Original Sin. We can all share Phillips' unexceptionable wish to "encourage the good and discourage the bad" without being quite so sanguine about the results.

Phillips does not, of course, believe in the redemptive power of the crucified and resurrected Christ. Human suffering as it relates to Christ's sacrifice is, for her, meaningless. But Phillips the neoconservative goes further than most. Not only does she reject outright the New Covenant which forms the New Israel that is (so Catholics believe) the Catholic Church, but she thinks that anyone who believes that the New Covenant has superseded the Sinai Covenant is necessarily anti-Semitic (her article on the matter is

## Phillips supports torture, cluster-bombing and nuclear strikes and, in practice, rejects traditional just war theory.

man as a fallen being, inherently sinful. The neocons have the Jewish view that mankind has a capacity for good or ill. Christians believe humanity is redeemed through Christ on the cross; the neo-con approach is founded on the belief that individuals have to redeem themselves. Christians believe in transforming fallen humanity through a series of mystical beliefs and events. Neocons believe in taking the world as it is, but encouraging the good and discouraging the

cussion the theological dimension of political movements. It would be nice, however, if she allowed others to bring in that dimension too. The BBC filmmaker Adam Curtis made a series of films entitled *The Power of Nightmares* about neoconservatives and radical Islam. Not only was Israel not mentioned, but nor (if I remember rightly) were the words Jew, Jewish or Judaism. I regarded this as a striking omission. Still, at least no one could accuse Mr Curtis of



entitled "Christians who hate the Jews"). Assuming that Ms. Phillips knows the history of this view (an incautious assumption) she is condemning as anti-Semitic Christ Himself, St Peter, St Paul, all of the Church Fathers, all of the Popes, all Saints, and all orthodox Catholics. Not only that but, as Jewish convert Israel Shamir points out,

Her insufficient grasp of ideas calls it "replacement theology invented by a revisionist Palestinian theologian." . . . A genuine article is "replaced" with a substitute, while an outdated idea is "superseded" by a newer one. It was indeed invented by a "revisionist Palestinian theologian," but his name was not Canon Ateek, as she claims, but Prophet Isaiah. He spoke of the New Covenant that will supersede the Old one. Afterwards, this idea became the cornerstone of Christianity, as the New Covenant between God and the Church (Israel of spirit) superseded the Old Covenant between God and Israel of flesh. Ignorant Jews present it as an act of "hatred of Jews." But it was just the opposite: the act of eradicating hatred between Jews and non-Jews.

Had Phillips listened to the man who is now pope she would have learned that "The Torah of the Messiah is the Messiah, Jesus, himself. . . To imitate him, to follow him in discipleship, is therefore to keep the Torah, which has been fulfilled once and for all. *Thus the Sinai covenant is superseded.*"

Rejection of the New Covenant is rejection of Christ. If to follow Christ and His Church is necessarily anti-Semitic and if neoconservatism is a Jewish movement

(even if rejected by most Jews) then it should come as no surprise that critics of neoconservatism, especially if they are Christian, are accused of anti-Semitism. In being thus slandered, they are in good company.

Thus far I have quoted various people's views on what the word neoconservatism denotes. In so doing I have aimed to give an impression of some common themes which roughly identify the aims of any movement that might be called neoconservative. I started with geopolitical concerns and moved on to theological assumptions. With regard to the latter, we have those like Melanie Phillips openly identifying neoconservatism as a Jewish (or Jewish-inspired) movement. Promoting the central goals of such a movement/ideology, as she describes it, is surely incompatible with living a good Christian life. For a start, the doctrine of Original Sin can never be downplayed—it is absolutely central to the Christian life and to any understanding of the Gospels, Sacraments etc. To minimize or ignore this doctrine is to invite upon oneself some of the greatest disasters of history.

Standard Christian teaching holds that the Incarnation came about because of Original Sin. And through the Incarnation the God-Man Christ, the Second Adam, chose through love to embrace suffering on the Cross in order to bring about an atoning sacrifice offered to all mankind. If a Christian believes in the doctrine of Original Sin, he also believes in the need for Redemption through a Second Adam, the perfect Son of God.

Can't one deny or downplay Original Sin, brush it away, talk of

some vague need for 'healing'? The *tiqqun olam* to which Phillips refers was popularized through the Lurianic Caballah. The Jewish historian Gershom Scholem explains:

The realm of *gelippah*, where the sparks are held in bondage, is a distinctly political realm "represented on the terrestrial and historical plane by tyranny and oppression". The purpose of man's existence on earth became *tiqqun* or healing, restoring the lights in their original place in the universe before the breaking of the vessels had released the forces of sin and evil. "The messianic king, far from bringing about the *tiqqun*, is himself brought about by it: he appears after the *tiqqun* has been achieved. The cosmic redemption of the raising of the sparks merges with the national redemption of Israel, and the symbol of the "ingathering of the exiles" comprises both.

This form of Gnosticism has little to do with Original Sin but everything to do with a worldly messianism, the very kind of messianism that caused the earth-shattering ruptures at the time of Christ. And it is this toxic messianism that many neocons seem to be obsessed by. If the neoconservative movement—or loose group of convergent interests—cannot excommunicate someone like Michael Ledeen (in fact he is cherished) then I think we can safely say that the movement is a form of revolutionary messianism. Ledeen tells us:

Creative destruction is our middle name, both within our



own society and abroad. We tear down the old order every day, from business to science, literature, art, architecture, and cinema to politics and the law. Our enemies have always hated this whirlwind of energy and creativity, which menaces their traditions (whatever they may be) and shames them for their inability to keep pace. Seeing America undo traditional societies, they fear us, for they do not wish to be undone. They cannot feel secure so long as we are there, for our very existence—our existence, not our politics—threatens their legitimacy. They must attack us in order to survive, just as we must destroy them to advance our historic mission.

The program of those who would choose Barabbas over Christ has seldom been put so succinctly. No surprise, then, that this same man, a leading neoconservative thinker, tells us, in writing, approvingly, of Machiavelli, that: "There are several circumstances in which good leaders are likely to have to enter into evil: whenever the very existence of the nation is threatened; when the state is first created or revolutionary change is to be accomplished. . . ." To such a man, and his fellow-travellers as described below, these words of Elizabeth Anscombe were addressed:

But if someone really thinks, *in advance*, that it is open to question whether such an action as procuring the judicial execution of the innocent should be quite excluded from consideration—I do not want to argue with him; he shows a corrupt mind.

## SQUARING THE CIRCLE

So apparently neoconservatism is a Jewish-inspired movement advocating messianism, revolution, and a downgrading of the importance of "social" moral issues and, of course, war, war, war. While there is more to neoconservatism than support for Likudnik Israeli policies, a general adherence to these seems to be a necessary condition for being regarded as a "conservative" by this group. It should come as no surprise then that an aversion to Christ is present among a good number of adherents of this ideology, even if it isn't politic to admit to it. How, then, do people square the circle between Christ and anti-Christ.

In the light of these reflections, having read the July issue of *Standpoint* on the neo-conservative mindset, I fired off a letter to Daniel Johnson, the Catholic editor of the magazine. I asked him why the magazine welcomed the thoughts of certain influential US figures such as Paul Wolfowitz, a man who has not only advocated torture, but micro-managed it, as Major Michael Thomspson informed a US court in stipulated testimony. In 1978 Wolfowitz was investigated for providing a classified document to the Israeli government through an intermediary, and in 1992, as Undersecretary of Defense, promoted the export to Israel of advanced AIM-9M air-to-air missiles, despite knowledge that a previous version had been handed on to the Chinese by Israel.

What kind of ideas will flow from a character formed by such actions? No surprise that Wolfowitz promotes Robert

Kagan, a co-signatory of the famous letter to the President on September 20, 2001 urging to remove Saddam Hussein from power, "even if evidence does not link Iraq directly to the attack. . . ." No surprise that in typically neoconservative fashion Kagan's book essentially argues that due to remote and/or fabricated (and easily resolved) dangerous geopolitical possibilities, the US must follow costly and dangerous policies in the present.

Having noted two of the more openly extreme neoconservatives in the review pages (as reviewer and book author) I turned to Melanie Phillips' feature article which, while rightly drawing attention to a possible fraud [the al-Dura case involving the alleged faking of TV footage regarding the killing of Palestinian youth by Israeli forces] neglects to mention the numerous and well-documented cases of child-killing carried out by IDF soldiers over the years. Whether such killings are directly intentional or barely considered side-effects of rash and needless actions, they are absolutely wrong. That so many have been documented, including by Israeli human rights groups, surely deserved a mention.

Back to the review pages, I noted David Pryce-Jones talking about Nazis, whose crimes he takes so seriously he has equated them with Hezbollah's but not with IDF's "proportionate" dropping of 1.2 million cluster bomblets in south Lebanon, an issue that has bothered neither Pryce-Jones nor columnist Douglas Murray. Douglas Murray is a young neoconservative who takes all of the usual morally degenerate positions. While calling



himself a “conservative” he tells us that he is “pro-abortion, pro-gay rights” and spends much time criticising Islamic groups (sometimes fairly) while utterly ignoring anything Israel might do.

With the exception of Aidan Nichols’ fine piece, extolling a truly Christian solution to social problems, *Standpoint* has shown us that it stands, in many ways, in opposition to what Nichols is envisaging.

Only in passing did I note Nick Cohen, a follower of Christopher Hitchens who has travelled the same very short journey that Hitchens has. Cohen hates religion and is a keen abortion advocate. He is also capable of such brilliant arguments in favour of military intervention in sovereign nations in contravention of international law as: “If you say it is illegal to overthrow a genocidal tyrant... then you have to say genocide is legal”. Enough said.

Finally, I did not mention an extraordinary article in the July issue of *Standpoint* entitled “Barack Obama, Isolationist” by James Kirchik of *The New Republic*. Aside from the absurd premise (Obama is affiliated with The Council of Foreign Relations) the author clearly thinks that “isolationism” is a terrible, terrible thing, especially when there are messianic wars to be fought. That it is this (and not, say, his support for infanticide, prostration before AIPAC etc.) which is the one thing Kirchik (and *Standpoint*) choose to criticise him on (not, say, his support for infanticide, prostration before AIPAC etc.) again tells us all we need to know about the worldview and priorities of *Standpoint*.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

My letter to the editor provoked no reply nor was it published (in common, no doubt, with many others). After a little pestering I eventually received an e-mail from the editor Daniel Johnson. He informed me that the letter was not published because it was too long (doesn’t *Standpoint* employ copyeditors?) and reassured me that he saw our disagreement was political rather than moral.

Along with “moral squeamishness,” the idea that torture is somehow a merely “political” issue suggests a moral confusion that is depressing coming from a Catholic. Johnson did try to point to future “Christian” articles but then proceeded to name a series of largely Christian-lite writers who undermine rather than bolster Christianity. This was in response to my praise of the one excellent article by Aidan Nichols in the July issue, extolling a truly Christian solution to social problems.

The following issue of *Standpoint* published another column by Julie Burchill, a woman who hates the Catholic Church and Islam and boasts of having had five abortions. Other than that, she is famous for washing, at tedious length, her (very dirty) linen in public and producing lesbian “chick lit.” What qualifies her to write for *Standpoint*? Well, she is utterly in love with Israel and in her column she literally wraps herself in the Israeli flag. Such are the moral standards of this “conservative” magazine.

Still, at least no Wolfowitz in this issue. No Wolfowitz; instead John Bolton, the neoconservative who

ludicrously denies he is a neoconservative (despite not differing in policy views one iota from self-described neo-conservatives). He uses his column to object to the fact that some people think he is a war criminal. Bolton, who has become something of a regular on UK TV, is a notorious Israel-firster and hard-line hawk who did everything he could to facilitate the Iraq war and block any possible ceasefire in the Israel-Lebanon conflict. Furthermore, as Tom Barry informs us, “According to news reports, including the highly respected Jewish magazine *Forward*, Bolton took part in unauthorized meetings with Israeli officials, including Israeli intelligence agents. He met with officials of the Mossad intelligence agency without first seeking ‘country clearance’ from the State Department’s Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs.” In its May 6, 2005 article on Bolton’s practice of manipulating intelligence and violating government protocol, *Forward* also noted that Bolton is “known as a strong supporter of Israel’s position that Tehran is coming alarmingly close to being able to weaponize its nuclear material.” Not surprisingly, when he was the US ambassador to the UN he was called “Israel’s secret weapon” by his Israeli counterpart.

To top it all, this issue contained a prominent piece by Rabbi Sidney Brichto on—you guessed it—anti-Semitism and that insidious form of it, anti-Zionism (he refers to the absurd Parliamentary Report on Anti-Semitism noted above). As well as inflicting on unwary readers a completely false impression of Israeli history (see Maoz) and the



1967 war, this Rabbi has the *chutzpah* to tell us that nowadays "History is dismissed as irrelevant." Certainly irrelevant is Rabbi Brichto's statement that: "Zionism—and its creation, Israel—gave that prejudice the excuse to breathe again. Deep down in the European consciousness, there lingers a conviction that the world would be better without the Jews. But as anti-Semitism is now an unfashionable tool for achieving this goal, the way to do it is by destroying the 'Zionist entity.'"

Such extraordinary statements contrast with the statement of the pre-eminent Zionist Walter Lacquer who informs us, rightly or wrongly, that "anti-Semitism in Europe is predominantly Muslim in character." Brichto's statement regarding the conviction held "deep-down" in European consciousness, together with his use of the now capacious term anti-Semitism is an appalling and irresponsible piece of armchair socio-cultural psychology that manages to be both tragic and deranged. This kind of paranoid mindset (his statement has yet to be condemned by Melanie Phillips or Douglas Murray, both of whom accuse Muslims of paranoia and scare-mongering) is reminiscent of the distinguished Jewish playwright David Mamet's comment upon seeing a bumper sticker reading "Israel Out of the Settlements" (S's transformed to dollar signs). The playwright said that such a slogan could best be translated as "Hook-nosed Jews Die."

This paranoia is not merely a propaganda tactic, but is in at least some cases, a genuinely distorted view of the world and, as such, a kind of sickness. One does not

help the sick by encouraging them to indulge in pathological behavior. It isn't moral, and it certainly isn't Christian.

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## THE CURE

The cure to these problems, in the Christian understanding, is, of course, to replace messianism with a recognition of the true Messiah. At the very least, the beginning of the cure is to reject the antinomian idolatry that the contributors to *Standpoint* indulge in. I do not know how much influence the editor has over the magazine. To cooperate formally or materially (in a way that cannot be morally justified) with the morally bankrupt pronouncements of the neocons can never be acceptable. Mr Johnson must either stand up to his funders and remove such obstacles to his faith or leave this sordid venture. As things stand, Johnson is allowing Zionists to keep Jews from the Way, the Truth, and the Light, and the neocons to continue in their overturning of people's appreciation of the natural moral law. The one thing that both groups cannot bear is the Cross. Daniel Johnson, along with all of us, need to embrace it again, and in doing so lead others to do the same.

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## ANTHONY S. MCCARTHY

Notes available upon request.  
Contact author at  
[asdmccarthy@hotmail.com](mailto:asdmccarthy@hotmail.com)

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## LETTERS, CONT'D FROM P. 5

Michael McClain. That's why Israel owes his readers an explanation, and preferably a thorough one (like Ken Freeland's explanation) as had been requested by the editor for a future edition.

In his account of the 2008 Trialogos Conference in Tallinn, Estonia, the editor quotes Israel Shamir as saying or giving the impression that he thinks that Estonian Russians are in the same situation today as Palestinians are in present-day Israel. That is his opinion. The situation is actually the reverse. The situation which Shamir is working to bring about in the Holy Land now is comparable to the situation in Estonia. The Estonians were not occupiers of a state belonging to the Russians. Shamir should be happy about the present state of justice by the very fact that he works for a free state of Palestine which he considers occupied.

The Russians in Estonia are only required to know the Estonian language, as Estonians were required to know Russian under the Russian occupation. I know for a fact that the Estonian government is not strictly requiring this knowledge before giving citizenship and passports to Russian Estonians, as many of our friends and acquaintances (Russian and Estonia) have received full justice in this situation.

Monk Serafim  
Telemark, Norway



# The Weber Thesis: Capitalism and its Myths of Origin

by E. Michael Jones

"a thing of immortal make, not human, lion-fronted and snake behind, a goat in the middle and snorting out the breath of the terrible flame of bright fire."

Homer on the Chimera, *The Iliad*

The origin is what really needs explanation.

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

No area of contemporary life, with the possible exception of sexuality, is as surrounded by myth as economics. When it comes to Capitalism, the great mythmaker of our day is Michael Novak. After beginning his career as a Christian socialist and promoter of sexual liberation, Novak joined the staff of the American Enterprise Institute in 1978, just as the neoconservative movement was gaining steam and moving from Trotskyite to Reaganite politics.

In 1982 Novak wrote *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, which attempted to come up with a theological justification for Catholics wishing to abandon the Democratic Party and support the Reagan Administration's crusade against Communism. Supporting the Reagan agenda had other *sequelae* less congenial to the Catholic mind, like the assault on unions that began with the firing of the air traffic controllers, but those and other negative consequences of the Reagan era, like opening up the American auto market to the Japanese in exchange for the purchase of Treasury bills, did not seem apparent at the time.

One of the main reasons they did not seem apparent at the time was Michael Novak. Professor Stephen M. Bainbridge referred to Novak as "the foremost Chris-

tian thinker on the economy," and to *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* as "undoubtedly his *magnum opus*." *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, Bainbridge continues, "appeared in a *samizdat* . . . edition in Poland during the 1980s and had an obvious impact on the Solidarity movement. Its reasoned defense of democratic capitalism as being grounded in the humane values of the Judeo-Christian tradition also helped give a moral center to the neoconservative movement"—or at least the appearance of a moral center.

Less sanguine in their evaluation of the effect that Novak's *magnum opus* had on discourse about economics, especially among Catholics, are the editors of the I H S Press edition of Amintore Fanfani's classic *Catholicism, Protestantism and Capitalism*. If Fanfani's contention that "there is an unbridgeable gulf between the Catholic and the capitalistic conception of life" falls on deaf ears these days, especially among Catholics, the main reason for that deafness is Michael Novak, "the man," according to the editors, "who has come to represent all that Catholic thought has to say on economic subjects." If there is one man responsible for ignorance of and hostility toward Catholic social teaching, especially among Catholics, it is Michael Novak. If most Catholics think that *Quadragesimo Anno* is a hunchback who lives in the bell tower of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, the main reason for that misunderstanding is Michael Novak.

How is it then that Catholic thinkers can come to such contradictory conclusions about Novak's *magnum opus*, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*? Well, it may be because the book itself is based on a contra-

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E. Michael Jones is the editor of *Culture Wars* magazine. *Ballet Parking* is his most recent book. It can be ordered from Fidelity Press. See ad on back cover.





diction.

At the heart of Novak's book we find a mythological creature, not unlike Homer's chimera, known as "democratic capitalism." This creature is an incoherent composite which purportedly has the powers attributable to the animals out of which it was made, powers hitherto unknown in the realm of economic thought. According to Novak's economic theory:

"political democracy is compatible in practice only with a market economy"

(In reality democracy and capitalism, like liberty and equality of French Revolution fame, are antithetical. Capitalism always concentrates wealth—and, therefore, power—into fewer and fewer hands. Has Michael Novak ever heard of China?)

"Modern democracy and modern capitalism proceed from identical historical impulses"

(As in Elizabethan England? Revolutionary France? Florence under Savonarola? Each of these instances had either capitalism or democracy but not both. Plato reminds us that democracy follows plutocracy as

its antithesis when the younger generation realizes that their elders had sold their birthright. The thesis of Kevin Phillips book *Wealth and Democracy* is that American history is a contest between wealth and democracy. In other words, the two are antithetical not complementary.)

"the natural logic of capitalism leads to democracy"

(This statement is true in a certain sense. As Plato pointed out in *The Republic*, aristocracy leads to plutocracy, which leads to revolutionary democracy, which leads to tyranny.)

"Except in Adam Smith's book, the concept of development did not exist. In 1800, a judgment like that of Ecclesiastes, 'There is nothing new under the sun,' blanketed a mostly torpid world. In most regions, economic enterprises stagnated."

(All of the economic advances upon which modern Capitalism is based—including double entry book-keeping, bills of exchange, and fractional reserve banking—were all in place in the city-states of northern Italy by the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, which is to say 400 years before Novak says they appeared in England.)

"The invention of the market economy in Great Britain and the United States more profoundly revolutionized the world between 1800 and the present than any other single force. After five millennia of blundering human beings finally found out how wealth may be produced in a sustained systematic way."

(The market economy was not invented in either Great Britain or the United States. During the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Capitalism was responsible for the de-

**"Capitalism was the social counterpart of Calvinist theology."**

struction of billions of dollars of wealth in American through thinly veiled looting schemes like leveraged buy-outs. During the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Russia was looted in an even more rapacious fashion under the oversight of Jeffrey Sachs and Lawrence Summers, then president of Harvard University. The





looting of Russia was so obscene that Harvard ended up being sued by the United States government and paying the biggest fine in its history, which led to the resignation of Summers as Harvard's president. Summers is now director of the National Economic Council for the Obama administration.)

"The churches did not understand the new economics. . . . Latin Culture did not understand Economics."

(Does Mr. Novak consider Italy as part of "Latin Culture"? Is the Roman Catholic Church part of "Latin Culture." Is the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church in Rome? Is Rome in Italy? In order to maintain his thesis—England created modern economics, the Church is ignorant of economic principle—Novak has to claim that Italy was an economic backwater, when in fact the exact opposite was true. Italy was the financial center of Europe for centuries. During the high middle ages, when Italy was establishing banking houses in Bruges, dominating commerce in Europe, and coming up with the financial advances that would revolutionize commerce, England's main export was raw wool.)

"The Catholic Church . . . has tended, particularly because of the Vatican's location within Italy . . . to rest uncomfortably in the past with only a tenuous connection to liberal societies. In a word, it has stood outside of and has, I think, misread the liberal democratic capitalist revolution."

(Novak's framing of the issue is so tendentious that it needs to be unpacked a bit before it can be refuted.

Does Novak consider Florence under Savonarola a "liberal society." Savonarola certainly promoted democracy, but he opposed plutocracy, which is another word for Capitalism, as manifested at the time by the Medici banking interests. Faced with an unprecedented expansion of commerce in Italy during the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Church was deeply and intimately involved in sorting out which economic developments were beneficial to society and which were not.)

"North and South America were founded upon two radically different ideas of political economy. The one attempted to recreate the political-economic structure of feudal and mercantil-

ist Spain. The other attempted to establish a *novus ordo seculorum*, a new order, around ideas never before realized in human history."

(North and South America were founded under exactly the same system. It was known as Mercantilism. Novak ignores the fact that that system found acceptance by all of the colonial powers in North America—England, France, Spain, and Holland. Novak attempts to draw deep theological conclusions from the fact that the United States has a larger economy than individual South American countries, even though for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Argentina was not far behind. The outcome of colonial conquest in North America was not decided by the triumph of a superior idea. In terms of economics, all of the colonial powers had the same idea. The conquest was brought about by force of arms. Mercantilism was another name for economic warfare. All of the mercantilist powers fought wars over the exclusive economic privileges which went with the right to colonize North America. In these wars, England defeated both France and Holland. What theological/economic lesson does Mr. Novak derive from England's defeat of Holland, a country more Calvinistic than England?)

"Latin Americans do not value the same moral qualities North Americans do."

(Statements like this may make sense to the Neoconservatives who were Novak's employers at the American Enterprise Institute at the time he wrote *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, but they are incom-



prehensible to Catholics, including those who live in North and South America. Catholicism is the target of Novak's book precisely because the Catholic Church is the main institution which claims that economic policy should be subordinated to the moral law.)

"Now that the secrets of sustained material progress have been decoded, the responsibility for reducing hunger and misery is no longer God's but ours."

(Have these secrets reached Detroit?)

"No region of the United States is poorer than it was in 1900."

(See above.)

Locke on Strawberries

"John Locke once wrote that the inventors of new economic processes and products—quinine, for example—were greater benefactors of mankind than earlier givers of charity. . . . It may have been John Locke (1632-1704) who first articulated a new possibility for economic organization. Locke observed that a field of, say, strawberries, highly favored by nature, left to itself might produce what seemed to be an abundance of strawberries. Subject to cultivation and care by practical intelligence, however, such a field might be made to produce not simply twice but tenfold as much

Whig history is based on the ability to draw grand theological conclusions from dubious historical premises. We're talking about things like Locke's discovery of the theological significance of strawberries. Or Novak attributing to Locke statements that were either commonplaces of Catholic thought for centuries, e.g. "Locke's vision of a novel and invigorating sense of the human vocation." Or statements that were flat out wrong, as when he claims that "History was no longer to be regarded as cyclical." What man living in Europe at any time after the birth and crucifixion of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and familiar with a Bible which begins with the creation of the world and concludes with a description of the end of the world believed that history was cyclical? Determined to pile Pelion on Ossa, Novak goes on to claim Locke's influence was so great that it affected our perception of the way God works on history:

After Locke, reflection on God's ways with the world—theodicy—was altered. The way God works in history was now thought of as progressive, open, subject to human liberty and diligence. The vocation of the human being came to seem ennobled. No longer were humans to imagine their lot

as passive, long-suffering, submissive. They were called upon to inventive, prudent, farseeing, hardworking—in order to realize by their obedience to God's call the building up and perfecting of God's kingdom on earth.

**If most Catholics think that *Quadragesimo Anno* is a hunchback who lives in the bell tower of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, the main reason for that misunderstanding is Michael Novak.**

strawberries. In short, Locke concluded, nature is far wealthier in possibility than human beings had drawn attention to before."

(Novak's invocation of the name of John Locke is the infallible sign that the chimera of "democratic capitalism" resides in a mythical realm known as Whig History. One of the heroic figures of Whig history is John Locke. Since Novak is writing Whig history, he needs to drag statements about Locke, no matter how preposterous, into his narrative, and give them a importance which their banality does not deserve.

Michael Novak's sense of timing was uncanny. In the realm of popular thought he both anticipated and facilitated the neoconservative takeover of American foreign policy. In the realm of serious ideas, however, his book was uncannily wrong. It was based on an intellectual foundation which had just collapsed. *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* attempted to revive the Black Legend for the benefit of the Reagan administration at the very moment when the final nail was being hammered into the coffin of Whig History with the publication of Eamonn Duffy's *Stripping of the Altars*. Novak based his appropriation of Whig History on the writings of H.R. Trevor-Roper, a notorious





Catholic basher whose credentials as a historian took a significant hit when he staked his reputation as a historian on the authenticity of Hitler's diaries. Trevor-Roper, known among his students as Professor Clever-Groper claims that the "secret techniques of capitalism were carried away to other cities," and then wonders "Why?" [H.R. Trevor-Roper, "Religion, the Reformation and Social Change," in *The European Witch-Craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 21].

Whig history is notorious for taking an historical fact, in this instance the decline of commerce in the Mediterranean when compared with the rise of commerce in the Atlantic which followed from the discovery of the New World, and then loading it down with theological significance, all of which is to show the superiority of English Protestant culture in the wake of the Glorious Revolution. Novak further loads the dice by referring to those nations engaged in the Mediterranean trade as "strongholds of the Counter-Reformation," making it all but certain that the reader will ascribe any change in economic fortune to their Catholicism. Sure enough, Novak uses Trevor-Roper's tendentious resurrection of the Black Legend as a stick

with which he proceeds to beat the Church, as when he writes,

For Trevor-Roper, the decisive fact [in the development of Capitalism] was a new alliance of church and state, more intolerable with each passing year, which drove the new class of Catholic businessmen in some cases out of their church but in many more cases out of their native cities and homelands. They sought out cities no longer under the control of princes and bishops; they sought self-governing cities of a republican character."

This is because:

The Counter-Reformation state impugned the religious value of commerce. It banned or restricted enterprise in the private sector. It licensed certain entrepreneurs to develop state monopolies; it favored state mercantilism over private mercantilism.

To begin with, there is no such thing as private mercantilism. Mercantilism is, by definition, government-sponsored economic activity. Secondly, when it comes to an intolerable alliance of Church and State was any government more repressive than Elizabethan England? Is Novak claiming that there was no alliance of Church and State in England during the 16<sup>th</sup> century? Is he claiming that Elizabeth did not grant state monopolies? Is he claiming that Elizabeth did not favor the pleonasm known as "state mercantilism"? Finally, where were the "self-governing cities of a republican character" which Novak praises? Were they in England? Was London one of them? No, "self governing cities of a republican character," places like Venice, Milan, Florence, Siena were to be found in Italy, where they had been in the forefront of economic advance for centuries.

In Novak's attempt to resurrect the Black Legend, all of history becomes a morality play in which English forces triumph over their Catholic opponents because of the innate superiority of their ideas, all of which revolve around the emancipation of economic life from moral supervision. According to Novak, the failure is all on the Catholic side, i.e. in "the failure of Catholic thinking to grasp the creative potential of democratic capitalism."

Amintore Fanfani, who was familiar with the claim that the development of capitalism was more intense in Protestant than in Catholic countries, was reluctant to conclude that the rise of England as an economic



power came about because of the superiority of English ideas, specifically the English idea later espoused as Capitalism. More important from Fanfani's point of view was "the displacement of trade from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic" as well as the disadvantages which arose from the fact that Italy was "economically divided into innumerable markets," while "the national state of England is already making giant strides toward unification, of which it enjoys full benefit at a time when in Italy there are but a few individuals who dimly realize the advantages to be derived from agreements between the various Italian states with a view to definite economic and political results. The capitalistic importance of a vast and unified market—which is far greater than the form of religion—can be seen by summary of the economic history of France and Germany." There is, Fanfani concluded, "no need to seek for mysterious influences."

Novak's thesis rests on a particular explanation of the origins of Capitalism known as the Weber Thesis.

In 1904 and 1905 the German Sociologist Max Weber wrote two articles on the origins of Capitalism which were later published posthumously, after Weber's death in 1920, under the title, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. The heart of the We-

makes this transvaluation of values intellectually plausible, as when Novak writes:

To the Calvinist, Weber argues, the calling is not a condition into which the individual is born, but a strenuous and exacting enterprise to be chosen by himself, and to be pursued with a sense of religious responsibility. Baptized in the bracing, if icy, waters of Calvinist theology, the life of business once regarded as perilous to the soul—*summe periculosa est emptionis et venditionis negotiatio*—acquires a new sanctity.

In 1934, the first extensive Catholic critique of the Weber thesis appeared with the publication of Amintore Fanfani's book *Catholicism, Protestantism, and Capitalism*. Amintore Fanfani was a student of Giuseppe Torniolo who worked closely with Pope Pius XI, who issued *Quadragesimo Anno*, the sequel to *Reform Novarum* and one of the pillars of the Church's social teaching in the same year. Fanfani characterized what he called "Weber's far-reaching hypothesis" as "ill formulated." According to Fanfani's analysis, "Weber's solution is unacceptable. . . because it does not admit that the capitalist spirit existed before the Protestant idea of vocation."

"Is it possible," Fanfani wonders, "for the essence of the thing—and for Weber the capitalist spirit constitutes the essence of capitalism—to come into existence long after the thing itself?" Weber's thesis ignores the capitalistic "facts" which had been established long before Protestantism came into existence, and, Fanfani continues:

if we admit that they could not be capitalistic unless they were produced by the capitalistic spirit, we must conclude that the capitalist spirit existed before Protestantism. If we reason logically from the data with which Weber supplies us, we cannot fail to reach this conclusion. Therefore, we cannot accept the idea of vocation as the origin of the capitalist spirit, or else we must say that it existed at an earlier time. . . . Weber's explanation is therefore inadequate.

The real origin of capitalism was not England in the 17<sup>th</sup> century but Italy in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The new, "capitalistic" mentality appeared at a point further back in time—between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries—in

## The real origin of capitalism was not England in the 17<sup>th</sup> century but Italy in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

ber thesis is the contention that Capitalism was created by pious Protestants in the 17<sup>th</sup> century: "The force which produced it was the creed associated with the name of Calvin. Capitalism was the social counterpart of Calvinist theology." This explains why the "business leaders and owners of capital. . . are overwhelmingly Protestant."

If Novak goes out of his way to confer the aura of "sanctity" (his term) on economic dealings which the Catholic Church had always considered sinful, it is because he got the idea from Weber. The Reformation (and the way it is viewed in residually Protestant countries like the United States) is the term which



regions such as Tuscany, Lombardy, and Flanders. This mentality, according to Fanfani, "guided the late medieval economy of the merchants and their first clever and unscrupulous entrepreneurs and traders; a mentality which Weber had identified as occurring much later in regions chiefly influenced by Protestantism."

As the editors of the I H S edition of Fanfani's book point out:

In substance, Capitalism was born, at least as a mentality if not a fully developed economic structure, in the merchant world of Florence, Flanders, and the Hanseatic ports, particularly in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, as a secularized form of that Christian activism that aimed to transform the world. That Christian activity traced its roots to the "Prayer and Work" of the Benedictine Rule.

It wasn't virtuous Puritans who gave us Capitalism; it was decadent Catholics. Fanfani "saw in this very same spirit not a development but an inversion, almost a degeneration, of the ethics of the gospel" which entailed "the weakening of influence of the social conception proposed and supported by medieval Catholicism. That and not Protestantism "is the circumstance which explains the manifestation and growth of the capitalistic spirit in a Catholic world." Capitalism came about because of "the growing distance, especially of the entrepreneurial and mercantile classes, from Catholic ethics. . . . The decrease in influence exercised by the church, following the breakup of Christendom incident to the birth of Protestantism, had ultimately accelerated a process which, nevertheless, was not born of the Reformation, but had its origins further back in time."

Contemplating this historical background leads Fanfani to his most fundamental conclusion, and the premise upon which he builds his economic theory, namely, that the Catholic ethos is anticapitalistic. Catholicism

is the system that places other criteria above the economic that is the adversary of capitalism. . . . Catholic theology and philosophy posit a religious criterion as the supreme rationalizing principle of life, even in its economic aspects, and again Catholic philosophy subordinates economic rationalization to political rationalization in that it relates the material well-being of the individual to the material well being of his neighbor and subordinates purely economic well-being to individual and social well-being in the widest sense of the word.

As Fanfani says at another point in the same book, "there is an unbridgeable gap between the Catholic and the capitalistic conception of life." The reason for this unbridgeable gap is the moral law. Catholicism sees all purposeful human activity as governed by the moral law. Economics is nothing if not purposeful human activity; therefore, economic activity must be governed by the moral law.

Capitalism, on the other hand, means nothing if not the exclusion of moral considerations from the field of economic endeavor. It purports to be a science similar to physics or mathematics as a way of covering over Capitalism's essence, which is the barring of any moral criticism from a science which is based, not on physical motion, but on the vagaries of human choice.

Because it is based on human choice, economics is inexorably bound up with ethics. Ethical considerations are built into its grammar, both in the form of the institutional constraints on individual action which it presupposes, but also in the model of individual conduct—of profit-seeking and the absence of any true altruism—on which it is founded. Furthermore, the *telos* of economic policies and even legal-economic regimes is based on a conception of what is good for society. In these ways, morality is as intimately related to economics as mathematics is to physics. This is precisely the link which the ideology of Capitalism suppresses.

Fanfani's critique exposes the "new sanctity" of the Weber thesis as ultimately little more than a rationalization which lends moral credibility to behavior that was hitherto considered sinful. But the repression of economic reality and moral reality which Weber's appropriation of religion attempts never quite succeeds. The repressed always returns. The more Novak tries to explain the "new sanctity" of Capitalism, the more the repressed returns unbidden to his explanation, as when Novak claims that:

the notion that the sustained application of practical intelligence to economic activities could open up new and unprecedented horizons awaited the capitalist spirit. Weber distinguishes the spirit of sustained incremental effort from adventure, piracy, luck, a windfall.

Novak mentions piracy repeatedly.

The new capitalism is not a matter of adventure or piracy but of continuous enterprise, planned and organized, evaluated for profit and loss. Without



the invention of double-entry bookkeeping, without mathematical sophistication, without the techniques of analysis made possible by modern science, continuous calculation would not be possible.

Novak gives the impression that only the English genius could come up with something this advanced. The only trouble is that the English, in spite of Locke's profound statements about strawberries, had virtually nothing to do with the invention of the economic advances upon which capitalism was based. Double-entry bookkeeping was invented by the Italians, as were bills of exchange, and fractional reserve banking. So much for Latin incapacity when it comes to economic science.

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## PIRACY

The English, on the other hand, were notorious promoters of piracy. This fact finds its way inadvertently into the best exposition of the Weber thesis in the English-speaking world, R. H. Tawney's *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*. Tawney writes: "Weber, in a celebrated essay, expounded the thesis that Calvinism in its English version was the parent of capitalism." According to Weber, "religious radicalism . . . went hand in hand with an economic radicalism."

In attempting to substantiate the Weber thesis, however, Tawney unwittingly refutes it. Every instance of Puritan thought which Tawney cites to show the transition from Puritanism to Capitalism goes awry. Richard Baxter, the Puritan divine whom both Tawney and Weber cite as a thinker in the new Capitalist mode, is thoroughly Scholastic in his economic theories, as when he writes that a man "must not secure a good price for his own wares 'by extortion working upon men's ignorance, error, or necessity.'" Or when he writes that "no man may secure pecuniary gain for himself by injuring his neighbor." Or when he writes that "He must not improve (i.e., enclose) his land without considering the effect on the tenants, or evict his tenants without compensating them, and in such a way as to cause depopulation." The Christian, Baxter concludes, "must so manage his business as to 'avoid sin rather than loss,' and seek first to keep his conscience in peace."

Oblivious to the fact that he has just disproved Weber's thesis, Tawney writes:

The first characteristic to strike the modern reader in all this teaching is its conservatism. In spite of the economic and political revolutions of the past two centuries, how small, after all, the change in the presentation of the social ethics of the Christian faith!

Tawney then goes on to make the same point in an even stronger fashion when he writes that:

Baxter . . . discourses of equity in bargaining, of just prices, of reasonable rents, of the sin of usury, in the same tone, if not with quite the same conclusions as a medieval Schoolman, and he differs from one of the later Doctors, like St. Antonino, hardly more than St. Antonino himself differed from Aquinas.

Religion, in other words, did not bring about the rise of Capitalism. The Puritans were as conservative as the Schoolmen when it came to economic thought, especially if we take into account the conclusions of the later Schoolmen at the Lateran Council of 1515. The conclusion to be drawn from Tawney's sources is inescapable. The source of the great change in the course of Western Civilization known as Capitalism was clearly not religion.

In fact when Tawney gets around to examining the turmoil in English life during the crucial first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, all of the evidence points away from religion. To begin with, the great upheaval in English life took place 100 years before the time when Tawney/Weber claimed that the doctrine changed and 200 years before it actually changed. The real cause of the upheaval in England wasn't a change in religious doctrine; it was the theft of Church property and the enclosure of the land and subsequent evictions which followed from this orgy of "privatization." It wasn't religion which caused the upheaval. As Tawney himself says, "it was agrarian plunder which principally stirred the cupidity of the age, and agrarian grievances which were the most important ground of the social question." The "new sanctity," upon closer examination, turns out to be the old vices known as avarice, theft, and looting.

One hundred years before Puritans like Baxter and Ames put pen to paper, the acts of Henry VIII and Parliament, severing the connection between England and the Church of Rome, "produced a sweeping redistribution of wealth, carried out by an unscrupulous minority using the weapons of violence, intimidation and fraud and succeeded by an orgy of interested mis-



government on the part of its principal beneficiaries, it aggravated every problem and gave a new turn to the screw which was squeezing peasant and craftsman."

Tawney is, if anything, more eloquent than Weber in describing what actually happened in England at the real birth of the Capitalist era:

Lords, no longer petty sovereigns, but astute businessmen were leasing their demesnes to capitalist farmers, quick to grasp the profits to be won by sheep-grazing, and eager to clear away the network of communal restrictions which impeded its extension.

The revolution in prices. . . after 1540. . . injected a virus of hitherto unsuspected potency, at once a stimulant to feverish enterprise and an acid dissolving all customary relationships.

The aim of the great landowner was no longer to hold at his call an army of retainers, but to exploit his estates as a judicious investment.

The haunting insecurity of a growing, though still

## Religion didn't bring about the rise of Capitalism; Capitalism brought about the corruption of religion.

small, proletariat, [was] detached from their narrow niche in village or borough, [and became] the sport of social forces which they could neither understand, nor arrest, nor control.

If, however, the problem was acute long before the confiscation of the monastic estates, its aggravation by the fury of spoilation let loose by Henry and Cromwell is not open to serious question. . . . Estates with a capital value (in terms of modern money) of 15 to 20 million pounds changed hands. To the abbey lands which came into the market after 1536 were added those of the gilds and chantries in 1547.

The magnitude of what happened in England in the middle decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was comparable to

the "privatization" which took place in Russia during the 1990s, and in the historical continuity which connects those two events we can come to the true definition of Capitalism. Far from being an expression of some vague "new sanctity," Capitalism was always the rationalization and promotion of looting. The only thing that changed over the 500 years of its history was the sophistication of the instruments which enabled the theft. Tawney is nothing if not eloquent in describing both the theft and the thieves. Henry VIII shared the loot because the Government "required a party to carry through a revolution." The looting even begat a financial genius to carry it out, Sir Richard Gresham, father of Gresham's law, a man who could hold his own in sophistication with the leveraged buy-outs of the Boesky era or the Ponzi schemes of Bernie Madoff. In fact the so-called "Reformation" had more to do with real estate than theology and had much more in common with the securitization of subprime mortgages than—pace, Messers. Weber, Tawney, and Novak—predestination or any other theological issue. As Tawney himself put it, the net result of the English Reformation

was to alienate most of the land almost immediately and to spend the capital as income. For a decade there was a mania of land speculation. Much of the property was bought by needy courtiers at a ridiculously low figure. Much of it passed to sharp businessmen, who brought to bear on its management

the methods learned in the financial school of the City; the largest single grantee was Sir Richard Gresham.

Before long the opportunistic plundering of Church property had morphed into an economic system:

In London, groups of tradesmen. . . formed actual syndicates to exploit the market. Rack-renting, evictions, and the conversions of arable land to pasture were the natural result, for the surveyors wrote up values at each transfer, and unless the purchaser squeezed his tenants, the transaction would not pay.

If religion played a role in the rise of Capitalism it did so primarily as a pretext for looting. In spite of his desire to substantiate the Weber Thesis, Tawney gives



the best description of the relationship between religion and the rise of Capitalism when he writes that "The upstart aristocracy of the future had their teeth in the carcass, and, having tasted blood, they were not to be whipped off by a sermon." Still trying to save the appearances of the Weber Thesis, Tawney writes nonetheless that "Puritanism, not the Tudor secession from Rome, was the true English Reformation, and it is from this struggle against the old order that an England which is unmistakably modern emerges."

This may be true of the Reformation, but the exact opposite is true of Capitalism. Capitalism began in England with the looting of the monasteries. It was the systematic rationalization of that looting which came to be known as Whig History, and not the Puritan religion, which gave birth to the creed "that the individual is absolute master of his own, and within the limits set by positive law may exploit it with a single eye to his pecuniary advantage, unrestrained by any obligation to postpone his own profit to the well-being of his neighbors, or to give account of this actions to a higher authority. It was, in short, the theory of property which was later to be accepted by all civilized communities" and came to be known as Capitalism.

Looting—not religion, and certainly not Puritanism—brought about the rise of Capitalism. Tawney's own testimony stands the Weber thesis on its head, when he tells us,

the most representative thinkers of the Church of England had no intention of breaking with traditional doctrines. . . . The utterances of men of religion in the reign of Elizabeth. . . had more affinity with the doctrines of the Schoolmen than with those which were to be fashionable after the Reformation. . . . In its insistence that buying and selling, letting and hiring, lending and borrowing are to be controlled by a moral law, of which the Church is the guardian, religious opinion after the Reformation did not differ from religious opinion before it.

Religion didn't change economics, as Weber claims; on the contrary, economics changed religion. The so-called Reformation in England made use of a religious pretext to move a huge amount of wealth out of the hands of the Catholic Church and into the hands of the looters. That the newly established Church of England benefited from this transfer of wealth is undeniable, and that that windfall caused resentment among the free churches, i.e., the Puritans, who were cut out



of dividing up the loot, is equally undeniable. The issue was not religious theory; the issue was theft and its religious justification. The crucial figure in all this was not some doddering Puritan divine whose economic doctrines were indistinguishable from St. Antonino of Florence but rather capitalists like "Sir Thomas Gresham, who managed the Government business in Antwerp." For people like Gresham, the idea of Divines prohibiting the lucrative returns on usurious loans was nothing but so much foolishness, because they construed all transactions from an economic point of view which *ipso facto* excluded moral considerations. The name of that economic point of view was Capitalism. The same truth applies today, suppression of the moral law in the economic sphere is the infallible sign of Capitalism. That along with looting, which is the praxis of Capitalism, are the constants which will accompany the progress of the "new sanctity" through the next 500 years of history, to our present day.

Both Weber and Tawney, as well as *epigoni* like Michael Novak, in other words, got it exactly wrong. Religion didn't bring about the rise of Capitalism; Capitalism brought about the corruption of religion.

The real situation was Weber's thesis turned upside down. The irony of Tawney's books is that he seems unaware that he is undermining Weber's thesis in the very act of presenting it, as when he writes that "This qualified condonation of usury on the part of the State naturally reacted upon religious opinion."

Precisely.

The crucial moment at which religious theory became aligned with economic praxis occurred not during the Puritan theocracy and dictatorship, but rather at the time of the Restoration, which is when the Jews—who switched horses in midstream, abandoning Cromwell and backing Charles II instead—were allowed to return to England (not, as is commonly thought, under the Puritans, who kept them out).

The real change came in the wake of the Glorious Revolution when John Locke, Michael Novak's favorite Whig propagandist, became the first thinker to articulate the new system of Liberalism, whose economic manifestation was Capitalism. By the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the established Church of England had completely accepted its role as the sanctifier of the new economic order. As a result, as Tawney puts it, "In the 18<sup>th</sup> century it is almost superfluous to examine the teachings of the Church of England as to social ethics." What set the tone in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was "the new Political Arithmetic. . . which . . . drew its inspiration not from religion or morals, but from mathematics and physics."

Capitalism, in other words, replaced Puritanism; it didn't grow out of it. Tawney makes much of the fact that Dr. Nicholas Barbon, capitalist pamphleteer, as well as "currency expert, pioneer of insurance and enthusiast for Land Bank," was the son of the Puritan enthusiast, Praise-God Barebones, and claims that the transition "had been prepared, however unintentionally, by Puritan moralists." But as LaPlace said, we don't need that hypothesis, not to account for the rise of Capitalism at any rate. Capitalism, if by that we mean the economic system which reached its fullest articulation in England in the wake of the Glorious Revolution, never got beyond its origins in looting. This explains the avidity with which Michael Novak appropriates Weber's claim that Capitalism was the work of pious Protestants. The Weber Thesis is congenial because it diverts attention from the real cause of

capitalism, which was the looting of church property in England in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Weber lends a respectability to Capitalism which it does not deserve.

That being said, any discussion of Capitalism is beset immediately by a semantic problem. Proponents of capitalism use the term as a synonym for "economic truth" in much the same way that feminists use the term woman as a synonym for feminist. When Novak uses the word capitalism he means "modern economics," as when he claims that the Church "opposed modern economics for centuries." In this regard, Novak fell into the same semantic trap that Weber fell into when he defined Capitalism as

identical with the pursuit of profit, and forever renewed profit, by means of continuous, rational, capitalistic enterprise . . . A capitalistic economic action . . . rests on the expectation of profit by the utilization of opportunities for exchange, that is, on (formally) peaceful chances of profit.

The perceptive reader may have noticed that there is no difference between Capitalism and Economic Enterprise here. This means that Capitalism is synonymous with economic science, which is synonymous with reason, which means that anyone who opposes

## Capitalism, in other words, replaced Puritanism; it didn't grow out of it.

the ideology of Capitalism is irrational. This is especially true of Catholic prelates who criticize Capitalism on moral grounds.

When the Peruvian bishops writing in the wake of Vatican II claim that there is injustice in the system of international finance, Novak upbraids them for their ignorance of fundamental economic principles, by which he means, of course, wholehearted acceptance of the tenets of the capitalist ideology. In the world of "democratic capitalism," the science and the ideology are one and the same thing. Or as Novak puts it:

Are the bishops really expert in technical matters of international trade? Before pronouncing moral condemnation, do they understand the laws which af-



fect international currencies? Do they wish to enjoy the wealth of other systems without having first learned how wealth may be produced and without changing their economic teachings? The Peruvian aristocracy and military were for three centuries under their tutelage. Did the Peruvian bishops for three centuries teach them that the vocation of the layman lay in producing wealth, economic self-reliance, industry and commerce and in being creative stewards thereof?

This is a familiar complaint. It's similar to claiming that unless the pope knows how to perform a tubal ligation, he has no right to condemn sterilization as immoral. It's similar to claiming that the pope has no right to condemn a war as unjust or specific tactics as immoral if he is not an expert on military strategy. Novak is essentially assuming that Capitalism as a technique necessarily brings about the best outcomes conceived as wealth generation. Strong arguments could be adduced that the outcomes predicted by economic theory are unrealistic or vacuous, that they don't in any case amount to wealth creation, that Capitalism is not the only or best route to various good outcomes, or that wealth creation in particular is not the summum bonum of economic life, and such arguments would indeed require some knowledge of economic theory. But they are simply beside the point. Just as the fact that killing civilians is absolutely wrong forestalls any further discussion of war tactics making use of such actions, so does pointing out that exploitation is wrong forestalls discussion of the technical efficiency of a system that allows for it.

Capitalism means nothing if not the exclusion of moral considerations from the field of economic endeavor. It purports to be a science similar to physics or mathematics, as a way of covering over capitalism's essence, which is the banishment of morality from a science which is inexorably based, not on physical motion, but on the vagaries of human choice. Because it is based on human choice, economics is inexorably bound up with ethics. In addition to providing the grammar of economic discourse, morality provides the necessary *telos* for economics by articulating the hierarchy of goods which is essential to any rational choice. Morality is as intimately related to economics as mathematics is to physics. This is precisely the link which the ideology of Capitalism suppresses. To give an analogy which further articulates the relationship of capitalist ideology to economic science, we could

say by way of summation that Capitalism is to economics what Darwinism (the late 19<sup>th</sup> form of Capitalist ideology) is to biology.

Whig history can't save either Novak's democratic capitalism or Weber's thesis from its own internal incoherence. This is *a fortiori* true of the questions surrounding the origins of capitalism. Weber's *Geist* is full of contradictions. Weber sees a connection between Calvin's doctrine of predestination and Capitalism, but predestination was more applicable to Marxism than to Capitalism and liberalism, both of which emphasized freedom of the will. Even Weber seems to be unconvinced at times by his own thesis. Weber claims that the man who best embodied the Capitalist spirit was Ben Franklin, and that "Benjamin Franklin's tabulated statistical bookkeeping on his progress in the different virtues is a classic example" of the Spirit of Capitalism. But Ben Franklin wasn't a Puritan; he was an anti-Puritan, and bookkeeping, as Sombart pointed out was, more a part of the Jewish religion than Christianity.

Weber then tries to locate the Capitalist spirit in the idea of "calling," citing "The emphasis on the ascetic importance of a fixed calling provided an ethical justification of the modern specialized division of labour. In a similar way, the providential interpretation of profit-making justified the activities of the business man." "The idea of duty in one's calling," Weber concludes, "prowls about in our lives like the ghost of dead religious beliefs."

Novak appropriates Weber's idea of calling in his book on Democratic Capitalism:

Slamming the doors of the monastery shut, as Weber put it, the Reformation had carried the energy of certain human virtues out into worldly callings. Progress and economic growth—not only personal but for the entire world—were seen to be the will of God. Progress imposed its disciplines, a kind of "otherworldly asceticism." This earth was now seen to be full of promise for science, the arts, religion and even the humble comforts of human life.

But, as Fanfani points out, there is nothing specifically Calvinistic or Puritan about the idea of vocation. The feature which makes Capitalism unique has nothing to do with religion or morals and everything to do with the repudiation of both.

Weber was closer to the point when he talked about Puritanism as "English Hebraicism" because, if any-

thing, the Puritans as Judaizers came closest to the Capitalist ideal not through the lucubrations of their theologians but by imitating the Jews' business practices. The first step in this direction was "covenant theology," or viewing man's relationship with God as a business contract. "English Hebraicism" made a greater impression in the realm of practical behavior than in the realm of theory, which tended to retain its connection with Scholasticism because the Jews

stood on the side of the politically and speculatively oriented adventurous capitalism; their ethos was . . . that of pariah-capitalism. But Puritanism carried the ethos of the rational organization of capital and labor. It took over from the Jewish ethic only what was adapted to its purpose.

As the religious roots of "English Hebraicism" slowly died out, the practical, which is to say, the particularly Jewish aspects of life took over, which is another way of saying that the descendents of the Puritans began to act like Jews in their practical economic dealings long before the Judaizing theology of the Puritan divines had passed into oblivion.

One of the first critiques of Weber's thesis was also one of the first which noticed the connection between the Puritans and the Jews. In his 1907 book *Jews and Modern Capitalism*, Werner Sombart points out that everything Weber said about Puritans was *a fortiori* true of Jews. If Sombart's earlier book on Capitalism caused Weber to write his articles on the Puritan spirit, those articles, as Sombart notes, led him to write his book on the Jews. "In fact," Sombart writes, "Max Weber's researches are responsible for this book. I have already mentioned that Max Weber's study of the importance of Puritanism for the capitalistic system was the impetus that sent me to consider the importance of the Jew, especially as I felt that the dominating ideas of Puritanism which were so powerful in capitalism were more perfectly developed in Judaism, and were also of a much earlier date." Having read Weber's thesis, Sombart wonders

whether all that Weber ascribes to Puritanism might not with equal justice be referred to Judaism, and probably in a greater degree; nay, it might well be suggested that that which is called Puritanism is really Judaism.

According to Sombart, Puritanism is really just an aberrant form of Judaism because

In both will be found the preponderance of religion interests, the idea of divine rewards and punishments, asceticism within the world, the close relationship between religion and business, the arithmetical conception of sin, and, above all, the rationalization of life.

Sombart was hardly the first one to notice the connection. He cites Heinrich Heine who asked: "Are not the Protestant Scots Hebrews, with their Biblical names, their Jerusalem, their pharisaical cant? And is not their religion a Judaism which allows you to eat pork?"

Or as one Calvinist put it: "If I am to say on my hounour why I am become a Calvinist, I shall have to confess that the one and only reason which persuaded me was that among all the religions, I could find not which agreed so much with Judaism and its view of life and faith."

Writing 60 years before Werner Sombart attempted to correct the Weber Thesis by claiming that Capitalism was Jewish, Karl Marx wrote in *Zur Judenfrage* that the worldly cult of the Jew was huckstering and his worldly god, money, and that the most Jewish country on the face of the earth was New England because of the Puritans who settled there:

the devout and politically free inhabitant of New England is a kind of Laocoon who makes not the least effort to escape from the serpents which are crushing him. Mammon is his idol, which he adores not only with his lips but with the whole force of his body and mind. In his view the world is no more than a Stock Exchange, and he is convinced that he has no other destiny here below than to become richer than his neighbour. Trade has seized upon all his thoughts, and he has no other recreation than to exchange objects. When he travels, he carries, so to speak, his goods and his counter on his back and talks only of interest and profit.

Marx too emphasizes the practical sphere of life, specifically commerce, as the area in which Jewish values have most influenced their nominally Christian imitators and admirers, the Puritans. Money, not theology, is the true ecumenical *lingua franca*:

Money is the jealous god of Israel, beside which no other god may exist. Money abases all the gods of mankind and changes them into commodities. Money is the universal and self-sufficient value of all things. It has, therefore, deprived the whole world,



both the human world and nature, of their own proper value. Money is the alienated essence of man's work and existence; this essence dominates him and he worships it. . . . The god of the Jews has been secularized and has become the god of this world. The bill of exchange is the real god of the Jew. His god is only an illusory bill of exchange.

As Tawney showed *malgre lui*, there is no difference on the theoretical level between the Puritan Divine and the Catholic Schoolman when it comes to the relationship between morality and economics. On the practical level, however, the exact opposite was true. If we ask what the Jew and the Puritan have in common on the practical level, the answer is Capitalism, not theology.

Marx, like William Cobbett, whom he admired, felt that Capitalism began with the looting of the Catholic monasteries. In breaking with Catholicism, English Christianity became Jewish again because by benefiting financially from the looting of the monasteries, the Anglican Church accepted Mammon as its god. This is what Marx meant when he said that the Christianity which "issued from Judaism. . . has now been re-ab-

**Werner Sombart points out that everything Weber said about Puritans was *a fortiori* true of Jews.**

sorbed into Judaism." The same Christianity which Marx characterized as "the sublime thought of Judaism" became Judaism again, which is to say, the worship of Mammon, once its *raison d'être* became the rationalization of looting.

At the beginning, the Christian was the theorizing Jew. He achieved this state by choosing the quest for heaven over the quest for money. Any Christian, on the other hand, who asserts the hegemony of mammon over morals, becomes a "practical Christian," which another word for a Jew. Or as Marx puts it: "The Jew is the practical Christian. And the practical Christian has become a Jew again." As soon as he began to subordinate morals to economic consider-

ations, which is to say as soon as he began to worship Mammon, the true god of the Jews, the Christian became a Capitalist, which is to say, a Jew, and Christianity became a form of Judaism. Framed in these terms, Marx's formulation covers both sides of the English Civil War, the Anglicans (who benefited from the looting when they became the state Church and the owners of stolen property) as well as the Puritans. The common ground which both groups came to share in the wake of the Glorious Revolution, when Roundhead and Cavalier joined together for the first time as "Protestants," was Capitalism, which is the worship of the Jewish god, money.

Sombart's reading of Weber sounds like a continuation of Marx's treatise on the Jews. According to both men, the *Geist* of Capitalism is Jewish. "The Jewish outlook," according to Sombart,

is "modern." The Jewish outlook was the "modern" outlook; the Jew was actuated in his economic activities in the same way as the modern man. Look through the catalogue of "sins" laid at the door of the Jews in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and you will find nothing in it that the trader of today does not consider right and proper, nothing that is not taken as a matter of course in every business. Throughout the centuries the Jews championed the cause of individual liberty in economic activities against the dominating views of the time. The individual was not to be hampered by regulations of any sort, neither as to the extent of his production nor as to the strict division between one calling and another: he was to be able to carve out a position for himself at will, and be able to defend it against all comers.

He should have the right to push forward at the expense of others, if he were so able; and the weapons in the struggle were to be cleverness, astuteness, artfulness; in economic competition there should be no other consideration but that of overstepping the law; finally all economic activities should be regulated by the individual alone in the way he thinks best to obtain the most efficient results. In other words, the idea of free-trade and of free competition was here to the fore; the idea of economic rationalism. . . . All these activities are summed up in the word "capitalism."

Sombart goes on to claim that modern capitalism is the child of money-lending, and that money-lending





is the quintessential Jewish occupation:

Money-lending contains the root idea of capitalism. . . In money-lending all conception of quality vanishes and only the quantitative aspect matters. In money-lending the contract became the principal element of business; the agreement about the *quid pro quo*, the promise for the future, the notion of delivery are its component parts. In money-lending there is no thought for producing only for one's needs. In money-lending there is nothing corporeal (i.e., technical), the whole is a purely intellectual act. In money-lending economic activity as such has no meaning; it is no longer a question of exercising body or mind; it is all a question of success. Success, therefore, is the only thing that has a meaning. In money-lending the possibility is for the first time illustrated that you can earn without sweating; that you can get others to work for you without recourse to force.

Like Marx, Sombart felt that "the Jewish religion has the same leading ideas as Capitalism."

In all its reasoning [the Jewish religion] appeals to us as a creation of the intellect, a thing of thought and purpose projected into the world of organisms, mechanically and artfully wrought, destined to destroy and to conquer Nature's realm and to reign itself in her stead. Just so does Capitalism appear on the scene; like the Jewish religion, an alien element in the midst of the natural, created world; like it, too, something schemed and planned in the midst of

teeming life. This sheaf of salient features is bound together in one word: Rationalism. Rationalism is the characteristic trait of Judaism as of Capitalism.

Capitalism, like the usury upon which it is based, is, as Sombart puts it, "contrary to . . . Nature":

Before capitalism could develop the natural man had to be changed out of all recognition, and a rationally minded mechanism introduced in his stead. There had to be a transvaluation of all economic values. And what was the result? The *homo capitalisticus*, who is closely related to the *Homo Judaeus*, both belonging to the species, *homines rationalistici artificiales*.

The rise of Capitalism in Christian Europe meant that the businessman would become more and more "Jewish" in his dealings with fellow Christians. The pious Jew was forbidden to take interest on money lent to fellow Jews, but he was "not oppressed by the burden of the anti-usury prohibition which weighed upon the Christian" when it came to lending to non-Jews. Before long the permission turned to a form of encouragement, that quickly degenerated into a culture of cheating in which the Jew was praised for his usurious dealings with Christians.

Sombart cites Heinrich Graetz, the father of Jewish historiography, as his authority on this matter. Graetz, "surely no prejudiced witness," wrote: "To twist a phrase out of its meaning, to use all the tricks of the clever advocate, to ply upon words, and to condemn what they did not know . . . such were the characteristics of the Polish Jew. . . . Honesty and right-thinking he lost as completely as simplicity and truthfulness. He made himself master of all the gymnastics of the Schools and applied them to obtain advantage over any one more cunning than himself. He took delight in cheating and overreaching, which gave him a sort of joy of victory. But his own people he could not treat that way: they were as knowing as he. It was the non-Jew who, to his loss, felt the consequences of the Talmudically trained mind of the Polish Jew."

As this attitude spread among Christian businessmen and combined with the undeniable fact that the looters in England belonged to the aristocracy, class conflict began to emerge as class among the English became the substitute for Jewish concepts like the "*goyim*," i.e., the people whom it was permitted to cheat. By the time Marx arrived in England, class con-



flict was an inextricable part of the capitalist system.

Similarly, the concept of the just price was not unknown among Jews but it only applied to fellow Jews. In the Jews' relations with the *goyim* the price, as the Graetz quote indicates, became whatever the Jew could extort. This distinction would have far-reaching consequences. As Sombart points out, over the course of the centuries Jewish standards of commerce became more and more the norm throughout Europe. Christian merchants began acting more and more like Jews, and gradually those methods began to supplant the commercial dealings that were based on Catholic moral theology in systemic fashion. With the rise of Capitalism, the Christian who aspired to treat every man as his brother in Christ was more and more supplanted by his Capitalist counterpart who treated the customer in the same way that the Jew treated the *goyim* in his business dealings with him. The Christians who were most likely to succeed in commerce became those most willing to act like Jews, as the success of the Lombards as pawnbrokers in places like Brugge proved.

Like Yuri Slezkine, Sombart felt that "the Jewish outlook was the 'modern' outlook." As a result "the

significant economic actors from the first appearance of the Spanish Jewish emigres in those countries." His claim that Jews developed "the commercial machinery which moves business life" is less plausible than his claim that they gave expression to its "inward spirit," or Geist.

According to Sombart the Capitalist ball began rolling with the expulsion of the Jews from Spain.

One of the most important facts in the growth of modern economic life is the removal of the center of economic activity from the nations of Southern Europe—the Italians, Spaniards and Portuguese, with whom must also be reckoned some South German lands—to those of the Northwest—the Dutch, the French, the English and the North Germans. The epoch-making event in the process was Holland's sudden rise to prosperity, and this was the impetus for the development of the economic possibilities of France and England.

Sombart's claim that the expulsion of the Jews from Spain brought Capitalism to northwestern Europe has a certain plausibility if we ignore the contributions of the Italians or if we insist on the semantic distinction that we have already made, i.e., that Capitalism is an ideology not a science.

Many of the Jews from the Iberian peninsula ended up in the Spanish Netherlands, and as a result Antwerp became the most significant entrepot linking the Atlantic trade in gold and silver, the Spice trade from the East Indies, the Mediterranean trade

from the South and the Hansaatic cities of the Baltic. Given Antwerp's link to all of these markets as well as to the river trade in Germany, it is no wonder that commerce took a quantum leap forward under these conditions, and given the role that Jews recently expelled from Spain (in collaboration with English Protestants and Dutch Calvinists) played in defining how that commerce would be conducted, it is not surprising that Capitalism would become *ipso facto* inimical to Catholic interests and the moral law as well.

Sombart, like Marx before him, felt that the United States was destined to become the pre-eminent Capitalist country on earth because of the circumstances

**Capitalism, like the usury upon which it is based, is, as Sombart puts it, "contrary to . . . Nature."**

Jews have been champions of the cause of individual liberty. They resisted regulation, supported free trade, free competition, and advanced economic rationalism. . . . The Jewish religion and capitalism contain the same spirit. Both are alien artificial elements in the midst of a natural, created world. Both are creations of the intellect."

Unlike Weber's theory of the origin of Capitalism, Sombart's thesis actually corresponds to the historical progress of Capitalism. Sombart claims that "economic activity follows the wanderings of Jews as they passed from the nations of southern to those of northwest Europe. Holland, England, and France became

surrounding its colonization and birth as a nation. Foremost among those circumstances was "Jewish access to newly discovered gold and silver in the countries of Central and South America," something which "facilitated their role in international trade in luxury goods." As a result, "the United States are filled to the brim with the Jewish spirit," according to Sombart.

After deconstructing Weber's claim, Sombart goes on to propose his own myth concerning the origin of capitalism. Modern Europe was created by a confluence of two groups: Germans rooted in the soil, and Jews who were wandering herdsmen. According to Sombart,

The capitalistic civilization of our age is the fruit of the union between the Jews, a Southern people pushing into the North and the Northern tribes, indigenous there. The Jews contributed an extraordinary capacity for commerce, and the Northern peoples, above all the Germans, an equally remarkable ability for technical inventions.

The main premise upon which the German half of Sombart's origins thesis rests is the claim that "From the very first [our ancestors, i.e., the Germans] . . . seemed to be rooted in the soil." This means that Germans, who live in cool forests, are closer to nature ("Man is brought into closer touch with Nature in the North than in the hot countries.") than the Jews, who "have received their peculiar impress from the thousands of years of wandering in the wilderness."

The German genius, in other words, brought forth the "feudal manorial system," a system tied to the soil:

from the soil which the ploughshare turns up arose that economic organization of society which was dominant in Europe before Capitalism came—the feudal, manorial system, resting on the ideas that production should be only for consumption, that every man should have a niche to work in and that every society should have differences in status. The peasant's holding, strictly marked off as it was from his neighbor's, gave prominence to the idea of each man's limited sphere of activities, of "the estate to

which it had pleased God to call him" there he was to remain and work in the traditional way.

This system finds its antithesis in Jewish Capitalism: "From the endless wastes of sand, from the pastoral pursuits, springs the opposite way of life—Capitalism." According to Sombart:

Their constant concern with money distracted the attention of the Jews from a qualitative, natural view of life to a quantitative abstract conception. The Jews fathomed all the secrets that lay hid in money, and found out its magic powers. They became the lords of money, and, through it, lords of the world.

As with Max Weber, whose book he criticizes, Werner Sombart runs into trouble when he tries to formulate a theory which can explain the origins of Capitalism. To begin with, the German half of Sombart's foundational myth flies in the face of historical reality. The Germans were not bound to the

**After subduing the local population, the Lombards exacted tribute so that they could engage in things they considered important, namely, hunting, warring, and raising pigs.**

soil, certainly not "from the very first" as Sombart claims. In fact, the rise of German hegemony over European culture, as symbolized by the Holy Roman Empire, began with the exact opposite of attachment to the soil. It began with something the Germans term the "*Voelkerwanderung*," i.e., with the wandering of the German tribes, beginning in earnest around the Fourth Century. When the Goths settled on the southern bank of the Danube and defeated the Roman legions in the battle of Adrianople in 378, the stage was set for centuries of looting and pillaging as these barbaric and largely Germanic hordes swept over what was left of the Roman empire and remade Europe in





their image.

The Lombards (or Langobards) are a typical example of one of the wandering Germanic tribes who changed the face of Europe after the fall of Rome by looting and plundering. After subduing the local population, the Lombards exacted tribute so that they could engage in things they considered important, namely, hunting, warring, and raising pigs. The Germanic invasion would have significant consequences for the economic development of Italy, and once northern Italy became Europe's premier power in banking and finance, their development would have significant consequences for all of Europe, and once Europe founded its colonies in the New World, consequences for the entire world as well.

The Lombard conquest of Italy began when the entire Lombard nation (200,000 strong) was driven out of their most recent home in Pannonia on the Danube by the Mongols. Following the route already established by the Roman legions, the Lombards crossed the Julian Alps into Italy in 568 "and soon overran

Venetia and the valley of the Po as far west as Milan."

In the aftermath of the invasion, the conquered "Romans" had two choices. They could remain on the land, in which case they became slaves of the Lombards. This peasant class supplied the material needs of the Lombard elites because "The main activity of most free Lombards was warfare and hunting; their land they left to be worked by the dependent population." A new Germanic aristocratic culture replaced its Roman predecessor, and "Their principal activity was hunting and the breeding of swine and other animals most easily adapted to forest life."

By the middle of the seventh century, the Lombards controlled a land area four-times larger than Byzantine Italy, but "the Lombards . . . were practically cut off from all maritime activity and even neglected to use their two ports of Genoa and Pisa." The "Greeks," on the other hand, controlled all of the coastal districts, all of the ports, and therefore all of the commerce of what was the former Roman Empire in the West. Commerce continued in Italy during the "dark ages," largely because of the ports of Byzantine Italy, all of which "maintained perpetual contacts with Constantinople and the eastern Mediterranean, which at that time were economically the most vigorous and enterprising part of the world."

Those who chose not to serve the new Germanic masters left the land and took up residence in the complex of islands that made up the delta of the Po and Adige Rivers, and which came to be known as Venice. Venice retained its identity as an outpost of the Roman empire largely through its navy, which facilitated trade with Constantinople, the capital of the Eastern Empire which remained untouched by Germanic invasions. Culture in Italy, as a result, took on a dual Germanic-Greco-Roman character. Tilling the soil according to the system of the feudal, manorial economy characterized the Germanic, Langobardian interior of Italy, while commerce with the Greeks, which engendered a money economy, characterized the cities along the coast. Eventually, during the course of the Middle Ages, these two Italies, along with their different economic systems, would come in conflict with each other, and it would be up to the Catholic Church to adjudicate their differences and decide which economic advances were compatible with a Christian social order and which were not.

The final element which contributed to the develop-



ment of economic life in post-Imperial Christian Italy was the Catholic Church, in particular the large ecclesiastical estates which were first managed in a systematic way by the monastic orders: "The man most responsible for this was St. Benedict (480-543) who in his famous Rule, compiled about 534 for the abbey on Monte Cassino, provided a model for the economic practice of all the Benedictine houses subsequently founded throughout Italy and western Europe." Gradually under the influence of Benedictine monks, who in addition to the traditional vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience, took a vow of stability binding them to one place, animal husbandry and agriculture took the place of the hunting and looting, which had been the basis of aristocratic Langobardic culture.

Sombart, in other words, got it wrong, when he tried to ascribe to the Germans some mystical connection to the soil. The real cause of Germanic connection to the soil came not from the culture of wandering German tribes but from the Church in general and the vow of stability taken by Benedictine monks in particular. It was they who tried for 1,000 years to civilize and Christianize the Germanic barbarian looters who constituted the ruling class in Europe.

Economic development in Italy took place in a cultural matrix composed of these three competing forces. Gradually, the forests and swamps of the Po Valley, where the Lombards did their hunting, were cleared and drained under the tutelage of the Benedictines, and the surplus food which this land produced helped feed the commerce-oriented population of cities like Venice, Florence and Milan, which could then engage in increasingly far-flung and sophisticated trading with Byzantium and the Levant on the one hand and Flanders and England on the other. This increasingly lucrative trade, especially after the added impetus of the Crusades, led, in turn, to increased economic development, which led to the need for increasingly sophisticated financial instruments to keep track of and facilitate even more complex forms of commerce. As increased economic activity led to increased wealth and increased wealth to increased power, conflicts arose between the stable feudal culture of the land and the money culture of commerce that was slowly replacing it as centers of northern Italian commerce like Florence, Lucca, Siena and Milan rose to prominence alongside Venice. "In the Middle Ages it was the international trade ventures that did most to favor the rise of the capitalist spirit."

Trade flourished in spite of ecclesial skepticism and downright disapproval. St. Thomas Aquinas felt that trade destroyed culture: "For," the angelic doctor wrote,

the city that for its subsistence has need of much merchandise must necessarily submit to the presence of foreigners. Now relations with foreigners, as Aristotle says in his *Politics*, very often corrupts national customs: the foreigners who have been brought up under other laws and customs, in many cases act otherwise than is the use of the citizens, who, led by their example, imitate them and so bring disturbance into social life. Moreover, if the citizens themselves engage in commerce, they open the way to many vices. For since the aim of merchants is wholly one of gain, greed takes root in the heart of the citizens, by which everything in the city becomes venal, and with the disappearance of good faith, the way is open to fraud; the general good is despised, and each man will seek his own particular advantage; the taste for virtue will be lost when the honor which is normally the reward of virtue is accorded to all. Hence, in such a city, civil life cannot fail to grow corrupt.

By the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, it looked as if Aquinas's prediction had come true for the city-states of northern Italy:

In the Italian cities of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries competition had become intense, and beyond what was allowed by law. Competition is no longer mitigated by aspirations towards a society based on brotherly unity. Religious holidays are no longer enforced by the State, which creates its own.

This is certainly the case if we take the sermons of the Mendicant preachers as an accurate picture of what was going on. Instead of embodying the Catholic ideal, Italy was well on its way to becoming a place where:

no one feels shame if he acts in a capitalistic manner. The younger men, swept along by the current, drag the old ones with them. Capitalists seek to break down the barriers that civil and ecclesiastical legislation set on their action.

The Church, as the guardian of Italian culture, could not and did not remain aloof as this conflict developed. Because there was no science of economics at the time and because the Church had always evaluated commerce from the point of view of moral philoso-



phy, the Church's evaluation of the social benefit of the new economic advances eventually crystallized around a discussion of usury, which meant not just exorbitant interest on a loan but any sharp business practice in which one party took advantage of another. For almost a century, from the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> to the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, popular Mendicant preachers like San Bernardino of Siena and St. John Capistran condemned the usury that was grinding the middle and lower classes of the rising Italian city-states into dust. The Mendicants combated usury both theoretically by their preaching and practically by founding *Monti di Pietà*, local credit unions that took care of small-scale consumer credit in time of need.

## THE SCHOOLMEN

At the same time, the Schoolmen were grappling with the various facets of economic life and trying to discern if the changing nature of financial dealings created a situation in which the lending of money at interest might not constitute a sin against justice or charity. In order to do this they had to distinguish between the various financial instruments. Bills of exchange, which because of the seven- to eight-week time lag between when they were issued at, say, Florence and when they were redeemed in Brugge (and vice versa), necessarily involved credit and payment of interest, usually disguised in one form or another. This practice seemed different from the point of view of charity and justice than pawnbroking of the sort practiced by Jews and Lombards, where the industry average was 43 1/3 percent a year (and often double that amount) and security for the loan was often the craftsman's tools, which meant he had no means of earning a livelihood while at the same time being saddled with usurious debt. Unlike bills of exchange, pawnbroking, by the nature of the terms on which it was carried out, necessitated financial ruin for those unfortunate enough to fall into the hands of the usurers. By the time the Mendicants had taken to preaching against them for acting like Jews, the Lombards had turned from the looting and pillaging that had given them hegemony over the Po valley to a more sophisticated financial version of the same predatory behavior. As a result of developments like this, the unprecedented advances of economic life in northern Italy had precipitated a struggle between a political

ruling class whose Germanic roots in looting and plundering had been sublimated but not eradicated and a Church which felt that all economic activity had to be subordinated to the exigencies of the moral law.

The other factor which came into play during the course of the 15<sup>th</sup> century in Italy was the desire to return to paganism, otherwise known as the Renaissance or, to give the name whereby its literary arm was known (especially north of the Alps), humanism.

As in England in the wake of the Glorious Revolution, the banking elites needed to rationalize behavior which the church had deemed immoral. In England the Whig party paid people like John Locke to come up with an ideology which rationalized English ruling class praxis. In Italy, that rationalization followed from the translation of ancient texts, particularly those involving Jewish and Neoplatonic magic:

The greatest contribution to the new economic spirit informing 15<sup>th</sup> century men was brought by the humanist conception of life, . . . which . . . took the most significant step towards the capitalist spirit by detaching their conception of wealth from its moral setting, and withdrawing the acquisition and use of goods from the influence of the rules and restrictions of religious morality. . . . The State ceased to oppose the new mode of thought and life, and instead itself threw off the influence of Catholic ideals, often in order to exploit human vices, as we see in legislation on gambling. . . . All these reasons explain the fact that the birth . . . of the capitalist spirit took place in a Catholic world.

Humanism sought the same thing in Italy that the Whig ideology sought in England, namely the release of the "economic action of the citizens . . . from the subjection to religious principles." Capitalism, in other words, preceded the Reformation; the correct correlation is not with Protestantism, but with a regressive and virtually degenerate form of Catholicism. The "capitalist spirit" was not born in a Protestant area. . . but rather it appeared first in Catholic countries; and that it was not an essential result of the Reformation, but rather it developed as a result of the progressive decomposition of the original Catholic ethic."

Beginning with the Hussite rebellion in 1419, Europe witnessed a concerted effort to throw off the yoke of Catholicism and return to a more primitive social order. For the Hussites, this meant a return to a quasi-Hebrew theocracy based on the appropriation of mod-





els from the Old Testament. For the Italians it meant a return to the paganism that they could extract, not from the Old Testament, but from newly rediscovered "ancient" texts like the Cabala and the writings of Hermes Trismegistus. The common denominator for those texts was magic, and, as I pointed out in *The Jewish Revolutionary Spirit*, Johannes Reuchlin made contact with that magic when he met the Medici agents Ficino and Pico della Mirandola beginning in the 1480s. Reuchlin then took the tradition of Jewish magic north of the Alps, where it brought about a fracture in Christendom which has yet to be healed. It was through this fracture that the spirit of Capitalism leaked into the world.

Humanism in Italy, not Protestantism in England, was the matrix which gave birth to capitalism. "The capitalist spirit," according to Fanfani,

has always existed in man in an embryonic state; which, opposed and held in check by Catholicism, became a social force when, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Catholicism declined; and which was encouraged by humanism inasmuch as humanism weakened Catholic ties... The capitalist spirit began by showing itself in the single act of a man who felt, momentarily, that he need not confine his activity within the limits prescribed by revealed morality.

Capitalism was born from the desire "of detaching earthly happiness from any higher destiny. This means

to banish saints and moralists, agonies and ecstasies. Such was the work that humanistic skepticism began, and the positive teaching of Protestantism completed." Capitalism was not the creation of pious English Puritans, rather it was "a manifestation of that general revolution of thought that characterized the period of the Renaissance" and which gave birth to the Reformation.

The new Protestant ruling class in places like England and the northern and eastern German principalities was composed of Germanic barbarians, like the Lombards in Italy, who reverted to type, i.e., to looting, as soon as the vigilance of Church discipline was broken by the Protestant Revolt. In England, Fanfani tells us:

The revolutionary changes entailed by heresy following on schism led to confiscation of church property, sale of lands, speculation, a re-shifting of classes, an influx from lower to higher state of society and the advent of new plutocrats, new landowners, new rulers... Confiscation encouraged speculation and a revival of the enclosure movement, which legal prohibitions were impotent to check.

## CATHOLIC DECADENCE

Capitalism is another word for Catholic decadence of the sort epitomized by the papacy under Alexander VI. It was born out of Catholic vice, not Puritan virtue. The Medicis understood that the return to paganism had economic benefits for those in the banking sector. The concept of a "just price" was a Christian innovation. In the ancient world the just price and the just wage were non-existent. The price was what buyer and seller agreed upon, the economic equivalent of might make right. The wage, when it wasn't subsistence under slavery, was what employer and employee agreed upon. This meant that the powerful got to impose their will on the weak with no interference. It was this fact of pagan life which the Medicis and their supporters, the Palleschi, found particularly attractive. Although not formulated in terms of a return to antiquity, this state of economic affairs was also the ideal envisioned by the nascent Capitalists who collaborated



with Henry VIII in the looting of Church property in England.

Eventually, the conflict between the Mendicant preachers and the Italian bankers reached its culmination in Florence during the last decade of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. A Dominican preacher by the name of Girolamo Savonarola drove the Medicis from power with the help of the King of France and began pressing the Church's case with unprecedented success. Emboldened by his success, he decided to beard the Medicis in their own lair by launching an attack on usury:

With the energetic cooperation of so many men, illustrious either for genius, or noble birth, or public services, Savonarola concluded, after the unheard of success of his preaching during the Lent of 1496, that he might at length venture to strike a bolder stroke, and to exhibit before the Florentines a spectacle to which their eyes had never been accustomed. On Palm Sunday there was seen defiling through the streets a long procession, representing the entry of our Lord into Jerusalem; the children alone numbered eight thousand. In one hand they held a small red cross, and in the other an olive-branch, except such as had the duty of receiving alms for the Monte di Pieta. After them came the different religious orders, with the clergy, and then an innumerable multitude of men of every age and condition. Last came young girls clothed in white, with garlands on their heads, followed by their mothers, who closed the procession. Never in the memory of man had such a scene been witnessed in Florence; the collectedness of this immense throng of people, the baptismal robe worn by children of both sexes while singing responsively Psalms and Lauds composed for the occasion by the poet Benvenuti. . . . When children sang "*Viva nei nostri cuori, viva Fiorenza*," the monk Burlamachi, claimed that it produced the impression of being transported to the New Jerusalem, and of the descent upon earth of the glories of paradise. Tears of emotion trickled from every eye, and many of the Palleschi, who had come to murmur or to curse, were so carried away by sympathy with the feelings of the rest, that they could find it in their hearts to do nothing but bless. It was the triumph of innocence and charity that was celebrated on this first day.

The triumph in question here was the collection of alms that was to be given to four credit unions, known

as *Monti di Pieta*, one for each section of the city. This more than the bonfire of the vanities which had consumed Botticelli's paintings was the act which sealed Savonarola's fate. Pope Alexander VI had already sided with the Medici interests when he refused to condemn Pico's translation of the Cabbalistic and Hermetic texts. Pico had repented under Savonarola's tutelage and had been murdered for his pains. Now it was Alexander VI's turn to side with the Jews, the humanists, and the usurers one more time.

Burning the ornaments of Florentine culture in a bonfire of the vanities was one thing, but taking that wealth and using it to fund an alternative to the usurious banking system that the Medicis and the Palleschi were growing rich from was "the last provocation to the wrath of the usurers and bankers." The funding of the *Monti di Pieta* which the children under Savonarola's instruction had accomplished was the last straw for the usurers and those who benefited from their usury:

The keenest instigators of this hatred were not the old men, angry as they were at seeing the daily diminution in the number of victims who had served as food for their licentious appetites; neither were they the professors of profane literature, whose occupation was falling in esteem to the level of the mechanic arts; nor were they even the bad priests and the bad monks, although anathematized and blasted with all the might which could be given to human language by the eloquence of a preacher without fear and without reproach; the most mortal enemies of Savonarola were the bankers and the moneyed men of all descriptions.

When Alexander VI signed Savonarola's death warrant, he did more than condemn an innocent man to death, he brought about the end of the world as well. Reuchlin's conniving with the pope's Jewish physicians got him the pass that would allow him to take the same pagan humanism north of the Alps, where it brought about the Reformation, which brought about the looting of Church property, which brought about Capitalism, which brought forth untold misery in England, and through England to the rest of the world.



# REVIEWS

## Calling it Conspiracy

**STEPHEN SNEGOSKI, *THE TRANSPARENT CABAL: THE NEOCONSERVATIVE AGENDA, WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST, AND THE NATIONAL INTEREST OF ISRAEL*, FOREWORD BY CONGRESSMAN PAUL FINDLEY INTRODUCTION BY PAUL GOTTFRIED, (NORFOLK, VIRGINIA: ENIGMA EDITIONS, 2008).**

In this meticulously researched and cogently argued book, Stephen Sniegowski presents the thesis that the 2003 Iraq war was, at root, all about Israel.

More precisely, Sniegowski argues that

the origins of the American war on Iraq revolve around the United States' adoption of a war agenda whose basic format was conceived in Israel to advance Israeli interests and was ardently pushed by the influential pro-Israeli American neoconservatives, both inside and outside the Bush administration. . .

Such a thesis does not mean that the neoconservatives intentionally sought to aid Israel at the expense of the United States, but rather that they have seen American foreign policy through the lens of Israeli interest.

Sniegowski identifies the neocons as a group and establishes that they have, at least since the late sixties, been strongly motivated by a close identification with the state of Israel, and specifically with a Likudnik view of that state's interests. A substantial part of the book (the best part of five chapters) is dedicated to a detailed history of the neocons, and a huge amount of

evidence is amassed, making this part of the book useful as a general—if not definitive—reference on the history of the neocons.

Among the events covered in this section are the neocons' move from the Democratic to the Republican party, apparently motivated by the latter's more congenial attitude to an aggressive foreign-policy, and their wielding of disproportionate influence by means of a network of interconnected, overlapping and mutually supportive think tanks, which also extended to explicitly pro-Israel and indeed Israeli and Israeli government, institutions.

The evidence adduced for the neocons' strong attachment to—even preoccupation with—a certain view of Israeli interests is overwhelming. Besides their connections with the Israeli foreign policy establishment, Sniegowski adduces in evidence a number of policy documents, detailed below, which make it quite clear that the neocons were directly concerned with the interests, as they saw them, of Israel, unmediated by a conception of US interests.

In the course of establishing the neocons' attachment to Israel, Sniegowski goes further and relates the development of a specific war strategy for the middle east originating

with right-wing Israeli strategists, and carried forward both in Israel and among American neoconservatives, culminating in the emergence of the specific neocon plan to bring down Saddam. Sniegowski describes a consistent strategy which varies in its details but not in its central focus: the geopolitical 'reconfiguration' of the Middle East by a weakening of Israel's neighbour states, generally by means of destabilisation and fragmentation.

Sniegowski amasses a significant body of evidence for this approach, starting with a 1982 article by Oded Yinon, an Israel foreign policy strategist and ex-government advisor, which recommends just such a fragmentation policy, with specific emphasis Lebanon as a model and Iraq as a target. It has been suggested that Sniegowski places too much reliance on this document in support of the fragmentation thesis as applied to the motives for the Iraq war, but this is not clearly so. Certainly considerable evidence is presented that the strategy formed a main current in Likudnik thinking at the time and since. An article by Yoram Peri, another government advisor specialising in military matters, argued against the policy—clearly stating that it was at the time dominant, and its intended outcome desirable—on the grounds that it would alienate the USA. As it transpired he was proved right when Israel received heavy criticism for its second invasion of Lebanon shortly after both papers were published.

That invasion, it must be admitted, does not quite conform to Sniegowski's very specific thesis of a fixed destabilisation and fragmentation policy. Although the 1978 inva-





sion had indeed achieved just such an outcome in Lebanon, Sniegowski suggests that the aim of the second invasion was to install a friendly Christian government for the whole of the country. However, this could easily be seen as a second, consolidatory, stage of a strategy depending on fragmentation. Furthermore, Sniegowski adduces evidence that the further aims of the invasion included striking a blow against Syria, another target for destabilisation identified by Yinon.

In any case, Sniegowski can happily grant that the installation of a dependably pliant government was an outcome at least as desirable to belligerent Israeli opinion, without conceding that the fragmentation policy he establishes was also central. In fact, ascribing to strategists an utterly inflexible policy of destabilisation over regime-change would be rather implausible. Perhaps a more salient objection to Sniegowski's account would be that it does not establish that the neocons took on the policy from its Israeli originators.

An argument taken from the translator of the Yinon article, Israel Shahak that the references in that article reveal substantial connections to the neocons is maybe

somewhat overstated, and would in any case suggest an influence in the opposite direction. While it is thus not clear that the neocons were involved in the development of the strategy from its inception, Sniegowski establishes that the neocons did indeed adopt the strategy not long after, and continued to work closely with Israelis in propounding it up to the time of the second Iraq war.

Indeed, Sniegowski suggests that the emergence of neocon involvement in the strategy only emerged after—and as a consequence of—its first

outing in Lebanon. As Peri had warned, the intervention in Lebanon drew widespread criticism, including from Israel's patron the USA. His recommendation had been to effect a change in US policy, rather than attempting to go it alone.

Passing over Sniegowski's detailed and compelling account of Israeli

involvement in the Iran-Iraq war, we take up the story at the end of the first Gulf war and an article by A.M. Rosenthal of the *New York Times*. [Rosenthal may be regarded as a neo-con fellow traveller in virtue of his hawkish brand of support for Israel which in 1999 earned him the Guardian of Zion Award, an honour he shares with Krauthammer, Safire, Podhoretz and the younger Pipes.]

Sniegowski relates that Rosenthal's article marked the beginning of the 'regime change and democracy' policy which became the mainstay of neocon rhetoric regarding the Middle East. Objecting to the failure of the US to press their advantage and invade Iraq, he wrote:

the "realists" have dominated American foreign policy, particularly on the Middle East. They constantly search for a "balance of power" that is unattainable because it is based on dictatorships, which by their very nature are the cause of instability. They dismiss the concept of morality in inter-

**"The American war on Iraq was conceived in Israel to advance Israeli interests. . . ."**

national affairs and believe that democracy is impossible in the Middle East.

At the same time as articulating the position that was to remain a distinctive feature of neocon discourse, Rosenthal manifested a clear, though indirectly stated, intention that Iraq should be frag-



mented in the process of invasion: "were Americans sent into combat against Saddam Hussein so that Washington should now help him keep together the jigsaw country sawed out of the Middle East by the British after World War I?"

Sniegowski follows the trail through the last days of the Bush I presidency and the 1992 draft Defense Planning Guidance document produced in by Paul Wolfowitz, I. Lewis Libby, Richard Perle and Albert Wohlstetter. Calling attention to the effect the document had in extending a militantly aggressive strategy into the post-cold war age, he notes that the document established the neo-con tropes that were to be called on later, referring to WMD as the main danger to the United States and even, in its draft form recommending "pre-emptive" strikes as a countermeasure. When a leak of this content sparked global outrage, Sniegowski reports that "the emphasis on unilateral action in the draft was altered to mention collective security, but the aim of US world domination and the emphasis on WMD remained." Sniegowski could have mentioned that the main scenarios considered involved Iraq and North Korea.

During the Clinton administration, the neocons were not idle. Lacking direct influence at home, their military strategising focussed more directly and obviously on Israel. Sniegowski cites the 1996 paper "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm," the realm in question being Israel, the publisher Israeli think tank the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies and the report's producers including, among other

neocons, Richard Perle, Douglas Feith, and David Wurmser.

The 'Clean Break' document, Sniegowski reports, was intended for the incoming Likudnik Netanyahu government, and laid out a comprehensive and aggressive new strategy for dominance over the Palestinians and the region as a whole. The plan started with a "pre-emptive" strike against Saddam, replacing him with a Hashemite monarchy. As in the case of the 1982 Lebanon invasion, this iteration of the policy to neutralise Iraq deviates slightly from the 'fragmentation' policy—though Sniegowski points out that like the rest of the document, it manifests little concern for the ideal of democracy that was later to be vaunted in neocon propaganda. The installation of an unthreatening regime in Iraq, itself regarded as an important objective, was also to be the first step in a wider onslaught taking in Syria and Iran (both of which the US did indeed threaten after the invasion of Iraq, but did not in the end attack). Another notable feature of the 'Clean Break' recommendations was an emphasis on the need, purely from a propaganda viewpoint, to appeal to "Western values" and US interests in, for example, missile defence in gaining US support for Israeli actions. Sniegowski points out that the document was directed toward the aim of achieving greater independence for Israel from US influence, at the same time as benefiting from US support. As Sniegowski remarks,

...the "Clean Break" study was an astounding document that has been given insufficient attention by the mainstream American media.

Though written to advance the interests of a foreign country, it appears to be a rough blueprint for actual Bush administration policy, with which some of the "Clean Break" authors—Perle, Feith, and Wurmser—were intimately involved.

Sniegowski further relates that Wurmser produced an extended follow-up document for the same think-tank, entitled "Coping with Crumbling States: A Western and Israeli Balance of Power Strategy for the Levant." As the "clean Break" report had, Wurmser's analysis viewed Iraq entirely from the viewpoint of Israeli interests, concluding that it was both the strategic key to the region and a vulnerable and harmless "crumbling" state. This view, it might be argued, could explain the move away from the fragmentation strategy at this time, since it would hardly be necessary to break up by force a country which was on the brink of disintegration in any case. It might be surmised, though Sniegowski does not do so, that as apparently had been the case in Lebanon in 1982, a second, post-fragmentation stage was envisaged, under which the area, or parts of it, were to be stabilised under an unthreatening regime. This might however be to rely too much on the imposition of a presumed consistency onto matters which can be assessed in any case only speculatively—something which Sniegowski to his credit avoids doing throughout his complex and closely-sourced narrative.

In any case, only three years later in 1999, Sniegowski reports, Wurmser, in association with Perle and Ledeen, produced another



document, this time for US consumption. In keeping with the propaganda aims of the Clean Break document and its follow-up piece, and in stark contrast to the image of a weak and unthreatening Iraq portrayed therein, "Tyranny's Ally: America's Failure to Defeat Saddam Hussein" offered stark warnings of a nebulous threat to the US from resurgent Arab Nationalism (not, as Sniegoski remarks, the Islamism that was later to become the pretext for the war).

### TOTALITARIAN TYRANNY

Iraq, Wurmser claimed, was "a totalitarian tyranny. Such tyranny is, by its very nature, violent, aggressive, and rabidly anti-Western." Again, the recommendation (this time to the US) was for wider operations throughout the area, in the interests, of course, of its people, though not by way of democracy. Sniegoski reports that the document advocated "a return to the rule of the Hashemites and the powerful traditional families. And he presented Ahmed Chalabi as representing this viable, positive tradition."

Wurmser added: "For much of the Arab world, factionalism constitutes the sole barrier against the absolute power of its tyrants." which suggests that plans for Hashemite 'monarchy' might not have been regarded as so different from fragmentation as one familiar with monolithic European constitutional monarchies might suppose.

Sniegoski reports yet a further step along this propaganda route which occurred with the publication of *Study of Revenge: Saddam Hussein's Unfinished War against*

*America* in 2000 by a Laurie Mylroie, which alleged that major terrorist attacks from the 1993 WTC bombing onwards had been the work of Saddam. Sniegoski writes: "Mylroie's Saddam conspiracy theory was far outside mainstream thinking, and she would have been considered something of an oddball if it were not for her connections to people with power."

He adds that the book acknowledged Wolfowitz, Libby, Wurmser and John Bolton, and was praised by Perle and Wolfowitz among others. He relates that after the 2001 WTC attacks, it was republished by Rupert Murdoch's HarperCollins, retitled 'The War Against America: Saddam Hussein and the World Trade Center Attacks', while Mylroie was employed as an Iraq expert by Fox News.

No account of the long road to the second Gulf war could fail to mention the neocon Project for the New American Century. Sniegoski traces the organisation from its foundation in 1997, through two letters, the second open, to President Clinton in early 1998 and a third to ex-House Speaker Newt Gingrich and Senate Republican leader Trent Lott, all calling for military action to overthrow Saddam, to the publication in 2000 of *Rebuilding America's Defences: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century*. Sniegoski describes the document:

In regard to the Middle East, the report called for an increased American military presence in the Gulf, whether Saddam was in power or not, maintaining: "The United States has for decades sought to play a more permanent role in Gulf regional security. While the unresolved conflict with

Iraq provides the immediate justification, the need for a substantial American force presence in the Gulf transcends the issue of the regime of Saddam Hussein." The report struck a prescient note when it observed that "the process of transformation, even if it brings revolutionary change, is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event—like a new Pearl Harbor."

There can be little doubt that Sniegoski establishes the Israeli origins and Likudnik aims of the neocons' long-standing plan for an attack on Iraq. The very specific thesis that the chosen tactic was to fragment Iraq is persuasive but not entirely compelling. The final, PNAC-era phase of neocon thinking does not feature the goal explicitly, though it is plainly a strong possibility, and less likely to be mentioned once the neocons had turned all their effort to persuading the US to do the neocons' bidding.

In the end, the truth of the fragmentation thesis is independent of Sniegoski's other arguments. It could be supplemented with the alternative that the neocons might have hoped to install a US- (and thus Israel-) friendly government—the US has certainly, predictably, attempted to ensure that should a stable government emerge it will be pro-US—or to ensure that a permanent US garrison would remain—which it almost certainly will. All of these would further the supposed interest of Israel in weakening its perceived enemies, and Sniegoski amasses strong evidence that at least one of those aims was the intention of the neocons in pursuing the war.

Finally, it should be stressed that in tracing the influence of this doc-



trine, Sniegowski has also produced a valuable reference on the neocons in its own right, replete with thoroughly-referenced information, and with particular emphasis on the departure of neocon thinking on some social and economic areas from that of traditional conservative Republican thought. This to some extent represents something of a digression from the main thrust of the book and perhaps reflects Sniegowski's own concerns. It forms a relevant part of the story at least insofar as it tends to show that neocons really did execute something of a coup in gaining such influence in the Republican party, which adds collateral support, if any is needed, to the thesis that the neocon strategy was by no means a programme based on traditional home-grown conservative foreign policy goals.

And so, with the neocons' hopes of a New Pearl Harbour hanging breathlessly in the eerie pre-9/11 calm, their members distributed among the second tier of Republican office, the media and Washington and in command of a highly leveraged echo-chamber of interlocking think tanks and foundations, we leave Sniegowski's tale for the moment, and consider some predictable concerns about the book's general approach.

Sniegowski is well-aware that his book is likely to draw accusations of anti-semitism. Proofing his book against such false *ad hominem* attacks costs him many extra pages of what ought to be, but are not, unnecessary clarifications. He is at pains to point out that the bulk of American Jewry were not in favour of the war and explicitly to cite Jewish sources, and flag their ethnicity, to back any claim relat-

ing to Israel and the neocons' Israeli connections.

The whole of the second chapter is given over to showing that the war-for-Israel claim is widely shared by those not plausibly regarded as anti-semites including Jewish journalists and politicians, and documenting the campaign of anti-semitism accusations made against those making such a claim. Indeed he quotes Jewish sources decrying this devaluation of antisemitism, ending the chapter with a quotation from another impeccable Jewish source, *Forward* magazine:

The line between legitimate debate and scapegoating is a fine one. Friends of Israel will be tempted to guard that line by labeling as antisemites those who threaten to cross it. They already have begun to do so. But it is a mistake. Israel and its allies stand accused of manipulating America's public debate for their own purposes. If they were to succeed in suppressing debate to protect themselves, it only would prove the point. Better to follow the democratic path: If there is bad speech, the best reply is more speech.

## CONSPIRACY THEORIES

The other accusation that Sniegowski risks is one commonly intertwined with that of anti-semitism — that of propounding a 'conspiracy theory'. This Sniegowski disavows too, pointing out that — as the title of his work and the foregoing summary of their paper trail suggests — the neocons were quite overt about their aims and much of their plotting:

Evidence for the neo-conserva-

tive and Israeli connection to the United States war in the Middle East is overwhelming and is mostly out in the open. There was no dark, hidden "conspiracy," a term of derision often used by detractors of the idea of a neocon connection to the war. But in the realm of politics, as George Orwell observed, "To see what is in front of one's nose needs a constant struggle."

The topic of 'conspiracy theories', their nature and status, is of great contemporary importance for the public understanding of history and politics. At present, dominant mainstream discussion of the topic tends to assume only two possible positions: the quietistic, whereby all talk of conspiracy is taboo, and the quixotic, whereby anything goes except coincidence or cock-up.

Sniegowski errs, if at all, on the side of the quietists. He draws attention to the (admittedly ridiculous) conspiracy theories put forward by neocons, notably Mylroie, mentioned above. Sniegowski notes her description as 'the neocons' favourite conspiracy theorist', and reports her pre-9/11 stories which accused Saddam of masterminding a terrorist campaign against the US. Likewise, the neocons' angry cries of conspiracy in response to the 2007 National Intelligence Assessment, which adjudged Iran to pose no current military threat to the US, are understandably rejected.

At one point Sniegowski makes rather questionable use of the 'conspiracy' label. He rejects the hypothesis that the US deliberately encouraged Saddam's 1990 invasion of Kuwait: "though logical, the conspiracy thesis assumes too



much planning on the part of the U.S. government.”

This is perhaps a little too quick. Deceptive use of diplomacy to trick an adversary does not amount to a ‘conspiracy’ in the usual sense, nor, in the absence of further explanation, is the reason given very convincing. It must be noted however that Sniegowski does not claim to have disproved the thesis, only to find it implausible. Further, this is a peripheral issue dealt with only in passing, which fact in turn suggests that the paucity of argument might reflect space constraints rather than a cavalier dismissal of the ‘conspiracy thesis’.

Sniegowski entirely avoids the issue of 9-11 covert action scenarios (or ‘conspiracy theories’). This is entirely understandable, especially given that it is not part of his remit to speculate on such matters. One may note, though that his honest and thorough approach means that he does not suppress facts or opinions which might be thought to support such theories. For example, his book inevitably highlights how very useful—indeed indispensable—the events of 9-11 were to the neocon cause, adding that “The report struck a prescient note when it observed that “the process of transformation, even if it brings revolutionary change, is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event—like a new Pearl Harbor.”

Chapter 8 (‘September 11’) reports Netanyahu’s contemporary comment that the attacks were ‘good’ for Israel and Sharon’s opportunistic announcement that ‘Arafat is Bin Laden’. Of course these factors are not lost on those who are willing to countenance 9-11 covert action (or inaction) sce-

narios, and of those willing to speculate about the sponsorship of such hypothesised covert action, many suggest some Mossad involvement. Sniegowski, to reiterate, does not address any such matters, which lie outside the scope of his concerns.

Sniegowski’s claim that there is no conspiratorial element in the events he describes is not entirely accurate since the key events triggering the war very clearly involved an organised campaign of deception which can only at the expense of all plausibility be regarded as innocent.

Sniegowski maintains the general approach of denying a ‘conspiracy’ despite making valid observations such as “the deceptive means used by the neoconservatives to mobilize domestic support for the war, especially belied their identification with the ethos of democracy”. It is possible that this is an expository tactic designed to head off knee-jerk reactions to the label ‘conspiracy theory’. Or it may be that Sniegowski himself shares this aversion to such vocabulary.

Nonetheless, Sniegowski faithfully reports conspiratorial aspects of the neo-con project. For example, Chapter 12, ironically titled “Democracy for the Middle East” summarises the tactics used by the neo-cons and other elements in the Bush administration. It is hardly necessary to rehearse here the scattergun approach to advocacy that included duplicitous variations on the themes of Al Qaeda, WMD and humanitarianism/democracy. But it is clear that a significant degree of deception was involved, and the standard excuse of mistake rather than dishonesty cannot really stand in the face of such shifting ap-

proaches. The question of the motive for such deception is to a great extent irrelevant — after all, almost any set of actions can be described as being done for subjectively good motives — especially if self-serving rationalisations are allowed to count.

Another conspiratorial aspect which Sniegowski somewhat underplays is secrecy — a common (though not strictly essential) component of conspiracies. Sniegowski points out that the neo-cons acted to some extent ‘in the open’ — and it is of course their non-secret statements that provide most of Sniegowski’s data. But that is only half the story. Secrecy is not an all-or-nothing business, as Sniegowski notes in passing: “...though acting largely in the open, they nonetheless have been shrouded in a certain measure of secrecy, especially regarding their connection to Israel. . .”.

This secrecy was not hermetic. Washington insiders and those who knew where to look could easily discern the neocons excessive sympathy with the Likud line. Likewise, it was not terribly difficult to discern that the neocons were engaged in a propaganda campaign in favour of war in Iraq. The image of a conspiracy in public life as surrounded by an impermeable barrier of secrecy is misconceived. One may draw an analogy between secrecy and hygiene. Even in surgery, there is no attempt to eradicate all bacteria from the environment. One merely needs to reduce the risk of serious infection to a low enough level.

In the same way, secrets do not need to be absolute—except in cases where the truth is so virulent that the very idea of its possibility (rather than its establishment to the satisfaction of those who would



rather not hear it) would undermine the plan, however plausibly denied or dismissed. This was not such a case — so the odd whistleblower or indiscreet remark could easily be dealt with — and the conspiracy remain just as much a conspiracy.

## COMPETING ACCOUNTS

In chapter 17, 'The Supporting Cast for War' and chapter 18, 'Oil and other arguments', Sniegowski addresses challenges to his thesis that the neo-cons were the 'driving force' behind the war.

Almost all of these are concerned with oil or private profit or both, and most are considered explicitly by Sniegowski. These are: private US oil interests, a general US interest in gaining access to Iraqi oil and control of the oil-rich region, and relatedly, the desire to establish more permanent military bases in the Middle East. There is also the matter of personal enrichment of some of the war planners via lucrative military and reconstruction contracts, which may seem a dreadfully venal reason for starting a war, but is not necessarily much more so than the others under consideration — and more importantly, is not entirely implausible given the characters involved.

Sniegowski is persuasive but not conclusively convincing on these matters. He argues that since the major US oil companies seemed to be opposed to military action and had been lobbying for sanctions to be lifted, they were not a significant factor in pushing for war. Certainly this seems plausible — though the significance of the push for lifting of sanctions is doubt-

ful — after all, lifting sanctions is one way of getting hold of Iraqi oil, regime change another.

More importantly, Sniegowski rather neglects a more plausible 'oil war' hypothesis: that perceived US strategic interests in gaining control of Iraqi oil might have provided a significant motivating factor. This possibility is briefly considered, but rejected on the grounds that maintaining such control would require very tight control over a puppet regime — and that in any case, there do not appear to have been plans for taking such control.

This is not entirely convincing. First, poor planning is not necessarily a sign of lack of intent. More importantly, US strategic interests are advanced by having guaranteed access to Iraqi oil, without necessarily having total control over every aspect of the Iraqi oil industry. But most significantly, the US administration has succeeded to installing a very friendly government, as well as establishing a permanent fortified military presence throughout the country — a crude but effective form of influence.

Furthermore, the Bush administration drafted an Iraqi Oil Law which the Iraqi government is pushing and which would put US companies in control of extraction for most of Iraq's oilfields. It is worth noting that if US companies have contracts to extract oil from most of Iraq, then they have a good deal of control over oil production — and can certainly prevent it from being arbitrarily halted.

Another angle to which Sniegowski gives perhaps inadequate attention is the question of wider oil policy in the region, specifically OPEC's threatened move towards

the Euro as the currency in which oil is bought and sold. This had serious ramifications for the US economy and its global power — and Saddam had only recently announced the decision to make the change (one which the other 'Axis of evil' countries and the disproportionately demonised Chavez were also involved in). That move — as regards Iraq anyway — has now been headed off. This is not the place to investigate that issue, but it is certainly one which merits consideration.

On the whole, however, Sniegowski's thesis is persuasively argued and — even though there may have been significant motives to explain the participation of non-neo-cons in the war effort, it seems unlikely that these would have been sufficient to precipitate the war in the absence of the neo-cons' efforts. One cannot hope to establish the complete truth about the Iraq war, however, without understanding the motivations and actions of one man who above all was the kingpin and central actor in the process.

Cheney is not obviously seen as an "Israel-firster," largely because he lacks the characteristic most obviously and commonly associated with allegiance to the Jewish state: Jewish identity. This is manifestly the central factor in the neo-cons' attachment to Israel. Indeed, notoriously secretive and inscrutable, Cheney is something of an enigma. The closest thing to analysis of his motives is the description as 'not neocon but nationalist.' Sniegowski then acknowledges that Cheney's appointment as vice-president was the single-most important Bush decision for war, but the neocons' "potential power could be fully ac-



tualized only if it had positive support from the top, otherwise the neocons would remain on the periphery as they had in the Bush I administration. Cheney would serve that supportive function by exerting far more power on behalf of the neocon agenda than James Baker had ever been able to wield. . . .”

The question of Cheney’s motives, then, is the only gap in Sniegowski’s analysis. To oversimplify, who was following whom? Was Cheney in some way co-opted, duped, won over or recruited by the neo-cons, or did he use them to further his own ends? More probably, was there an alliance between Cheney with his downstream oil interests and concern for US access to middle east oil and the neocons with their concern for (a debased idea of) Israeli security? Or was Cheney’s adoption of the Iraq war strategy simply a favor to his helpful neo-con staff? It is unsurprising that Sniegowski cannot provide a definitive answer to these questions -- for neither can anyone else. Cheney’s secrecy was extreme. According to Sniegowski he used huge safes for his routine documentation, refused to supply documents to others and even talking points for journalists were often marked.

Some possible motives were a general US interest in access to Iraqi oil and greater control of the oil-rich region in general through permanent bases in Iraq, the need to prevent OPEC abandoning the petrodollar in favour of the Euro, especially precipitously. These were the kind of motives which could be seen as in the interest of the US as a whole -- at least as seen by the elite -- though that does not

of course provide any defence against the Nuremberg hanging offence of waging aggressive war. But as Sniegowski points out, the traditional “realist” foreign policy establishment appeared to oppose the war. It is possible that Cheney shared these motives and simply disagreed on how best they were to be achieved, but in such a case, it seems likely that his opinions on the matter were influenced by his neocon coterie.

Another motive, for some war or other, might have been Cheney’s quasi-fascist mission to “restore the powers of the presidency” (and we must add, to boost those of the vice presidency). The events of 9/11 and of the subsequent “War on terror” were instrumental to his project of massively increasing executive powers. But there seems no compelling reason why he need have expended so much effort in directing the war plans in the direction of Iraq in particular, in which case once again the neo-con influence may be appealed to.

Finally there is the standard motive for most premeditated crime: filthy lucre. With his (temporarily shelved) interests in Halliburton, profits to be made in downstream oil and reconstruction were of course of significant interest to Cheney. And it may be that the downstream oil interests who had been lobbying for the removal of sanctions would accept a war as the means to that end, if the simple lifting of sanctions was unattainable. But of course a major force opposing the lifting of sanctions against Saddam’s Iraq was the Israel lobby, particularly the hyper-Likudnik neocons.

In the end, Sniegowski can admit any or all of these possibilities

without endangering his conclusion. The neocons did, he demonstrates, gain pervasive power in the Bush administration. They did view the US national interest through the prism of their own conception of Israel’s national interest, and they did provide the driving force for the Iraq invasion -- very probably with the intention of fragmenting the country into less powerful and possibly warring states.

Further, just because he is not Jewish or a Christian Zionist we cannot rule out the possibility that Cheney shared the neocons’ Israelocentric view of that most [flexible, pliable, pliant, malleable, adaptable, Protean, subjective, susceptible to self-serving interpretation: each sees what he wants to see] entity, the national interest. Sniegowski certainly shows that Cheney has been in bed with the neocons for some time. Whatever Cheney’s motives in pushing the Iraq war agenda, he could not have done it without the neocons. In the absence of a deliberate ploy by Cheney to set up the neocons as patsies for his own distinct plan -- for which we have no evidence -- Sniegowski’s thesis stands. There are always such theoretical possibilities which could, if true, undermine any historical thesis. But going on the evidence, Sniegowski has established his claim as well as anyone can expect and certainly better than any competing claim can be demonstrated.

---

#### TIM WILKINSON

Tim Wilkinson can be reached at [otisblue@googlemail.com](mailto:otisblue@googlemail.com).



# Bullets

\* Sen. Max Baucus's office insists his nomination of his mistress as Montana's U.S. Attorney was merit-based quite apart from her performance in bed.

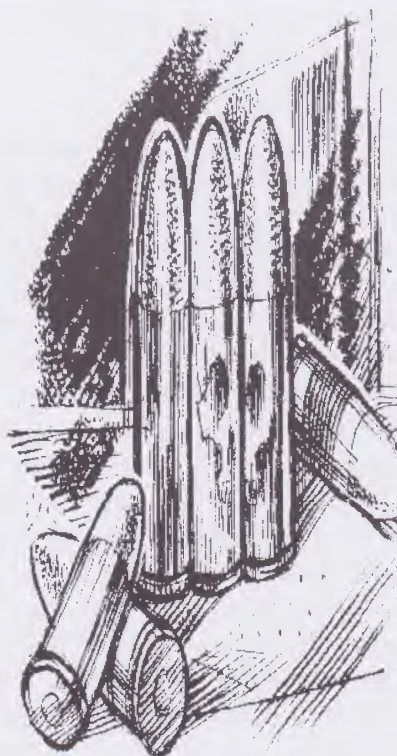
\* Catholic Identity. Notre Dame prof Peter Walshe pinpointed a problem at the university: "we do not have a mosque or synagogue on campus."

\* Universal Compulsory Abortion? "A planetary law, such as China's one-child policy, is the only way to reverse the disastrous global birthrate currently," writes Diane Francis in Canada's *Financial Post*. Her rant lends some credibility to her statement that, "Humans are the only rational animals but have yet to prove it."

\* Denigrating the Feminine. Saying that the "policy that has excluded women from assignment to direct, sustained ground combat" presents a "profoundly moral" issue, Donna McAleer and Erin Solaro then twist morality, writing in the *Washington Post* that "the military has an absolute right to expect servicewomen to engage in combat."

\* Zero Tolerance. In Taunton, MA, an 8-year-old boy was sent home from school and forced to undergo psychological testing after drawing a stick-figure of Jesus nailed to the cross. "Religion had nothing to do with this at all," said Julie Hackett, superintendent of the town's schools, denying the obvious.

\* "After Barack Obama's Nobel Peace Prize speech, anyone still questioning whether he is really a Christian, rather than a Muslim aligned with fanaticism, needs to seek therapy forthwith," says Kathleen Parker in a *Washington Post* op-ed. Why would anyone be convinced he's a Christian just because he prattled about just war



theory to justify his militarism?

\* "Obama is really an American committed to his nation's values," continues Parker. That nails it. But what does it do her insistence that he "is really a Christian"? Unless one assumes American values are *ipso facto* Christian, that is.

\* "Woods announced an indefinite leave from golf and public life to try to rescue his marriage after two weeks of intense coverage of his infidelity sullied his carefully cultivated good guy image," reported *AP*. "The decision and contrite tone of his statement was seen by marketing experts as a smart step to repairing his public image." Who gives a damn about marketing and image when a family is in jeopardy? We pray he's now able to put family first, even if he never hits another golf ball or sells another car.

\* Tolerance and Ecumenism? Graffiti on the doors leading to the Franciscan church adjoining the Cenacle on Mount Zion, next to the Room of the Last Supper: "We killed Jesus," "Christians out" (in English and Hebrew), and "F\*\*\* off,"

JAMES G. BRUEN, JR.

E-Mail: [cwbullets@yahoo.com](mailto:cwbullets@yahoo.com)

adorned with a Star of David. Daily urination on the door is the norm.

\* Make War, Not Babies. Maj. Gen. Anthony Cucolo, who runs U.S. operations in northern Iraq, issued orders under which female troops, married or single, expecting a baby faced court martial and prison along with the men who impregnate them. If a woman underwent artificial insemination, would the doctors be jailed?

\* Might we suggest a new recruiting slogan for the military? Pregnancy: Punishable by Imprisonment.

\* "I see absolutely no circumstance where I would punish a female soldier by court martial for a violation . . . none," a retreating Gen. Cucolo told *ABC News* when his order became known publicly. "I fully intend to handle these cases through lesser disciplinary action." Lesser disciplinary action? Maybe summary execution of her child?

\* Recognizing Pius XII's "heroic virtues," Pope Benedict XVI declared him Venerable to the consternation of many Jewish groups. "In this beatification plan, we can only see an implicit approval of Pius XII's behaviour towards the executioners of the Jews at the time of Nazi barbarity," said the French branch of B'nai B'rith. When canonized, perhaps Pius will be named patron of those falsely accused of anti-Semitism.

\* When the *Washington Post* said one of its book reviews "incorrectly used the word 'he' to refer to the transgendered writer Jennifer Finney Boylan," it didn't specify what the correct pronoun would have been.

\* Recommend your favorite book by E. Michael Jones to a friend. Haven't read any? Time to buy one. You can find a complete list at [www.CultureWars.com](http://www.CultureWars.com).



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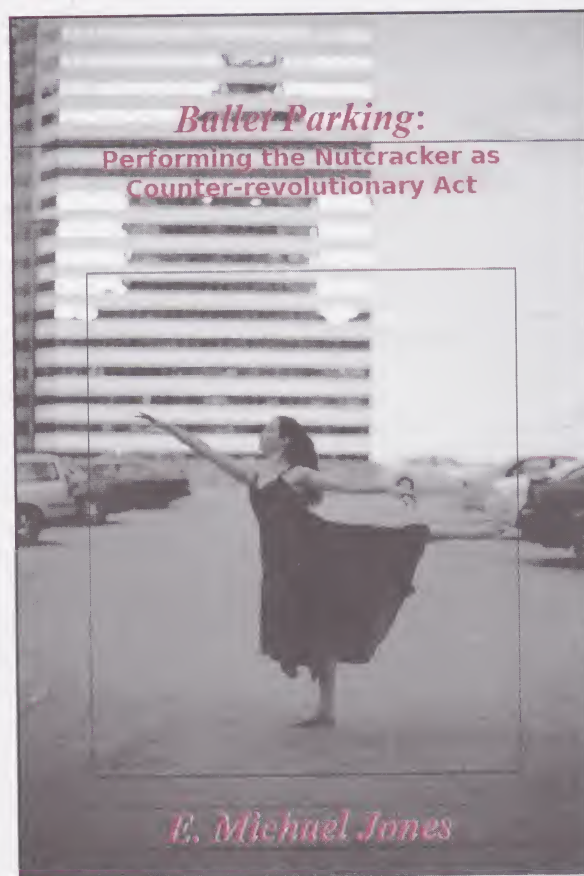
By E. Michael Jones

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# Culture Wars

*"No social progress outside the moral order."*



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Editor

E. Michael Jones, Ph.D.

Business Manager

Ruth P. Jones

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to [Jones@culturewars.com](mailto:Jones@culturewars.com)



# LETTERS

## WAITING FOR YEARS

Thank you for your recent book review of Josh Kosman's *The Buyout of America* (CW, March 2010). I've been waiting years for you or Dr. Ederer to do an analysis of Austrian economics, and this book review was a marvelous job. I understand more clearly now that their solution of no regulation is no better than we have now, since the pseudo regulation we have now is so chock full of loopholes as to be useless. That's no surprise since Wall Street runs our government (and has for many years) for their own benefit.

However, even though Austrian economics is not Catholic and its "solutions" are bad, they are still the only economic system or school of thought that even comes close to explaining what's going on in the economy. I know Catholic social teaching teaches us what a Catholic economic system should be, but it doesn't do me much good since I will never get the chance to mold the economy to my liking. I have not been able to find a Catholic school of economic thought that, as the Austrians do, explain that fractional reserve banking is a fraud (the deposits are available on demand at the same time 90 percent of them have been lent out for long term mortgages), that the semi-public Federal Reserve is a banking cartel who's purpose is to ensure the survival of the largest banks and end bank runs on them (see *The Creature from Jekyll Island*), that inflation is defined as an increase in the money supply, which shows up as an increase in either consumer prices, asset prices, or both. They have the only explanation for the "business cycle" that I've ever seen

that makes any sense, that central banks artificially lower interest rates and print money, thereby causing a false boom, and as soon as the increase in the money supply ceases or even fails to increase, then the boom stops and a crash/recession ensues. That paper fiat money not backed by anything removes any restraint on central banks and governments from printing as much of it as they like, which is why, after remaining stable for over a hundred years, the U.S. dollar has lost 95 percent of its purchasing power since the Federal Reserve was created in 1913 (it now takes a dollar to buy what a nickel bought in 1913). This "counterfeiting" of our money causes price inflation and punishes savers and those on fixed incomes by making our savings worth less and less each year.

I just wish their understanding of the way the economy worked wasn't hobbled by their ideology, which is essentially to let the strong prey on the weak (Belloc called Calvinism the religion of greed). The followers of Austrian economics that I read, such as Bill Bonner, Gary North, and others, decry the crony capitalism that is running rampant, but they offer no solutions except to make it even worse by removing all regulations. Some solution! However, to give them credit, they are almost the only ones who warned in 1999 that tech stocks were a bubble, and since 2005 they've been telling me that housing was a massive bubble and to stay away from real estate and stocks (and to buy gold). As always, keep up the good work. Your magazine is the only one I know of that is even attempting to address economics from a Catholic perspective.

Michael Breslin  
New Hudson, Michigan

## ABSOLUTELY RIGHT

Just a note to tell you how much I enjoyed your review of Josh Kosman's book on leveraged buyouts in the March issue of the *Culture Wars*. As I've mentioned to you many times I have always enjoyed your writing. That's why I have been a subscriber for over 20 years. Although, I may not have agreed with you on everything your writing as always provided me with a lot to think about.

You're absolutely right that this buyout craze is dependent upon and fueled by cheap credit provided by the Federal Reserve System. It seems everyone wants regulation except that of the expansion of credit! You should be aware that the only school of economics which has consistently opposed the expansion of credit has been the Austrian School which you criticize.

Having taught Catholic social policy, finance, and economics for over 40 years I have not found any other school to sharply criticize this credit expansion but the Austrians. Not Keynes, not Ederer, not Friedman and the monetarists, not the German Historical School, no one but the Austrians! And, their criticism goes back to 1912!

Again, you're absolutely right; if this credit expansion had not been carried out then this buyout craze and all of its accompanying evils would not have happened. In all of history, every expansion of credit has led to all sorts of shady practices in the marketplace. Also, I think that there is a tremendous gap in Catholic social policy on the teaching of inflation and its morality. We should be pushing for an



encyclical on the morality of expanding credit! In my researches, I have found very little from the popes on the topic of inflation and money which seems to be the source of this entire mess!

I see that you're also quite critical of Dr. Thomas Woods. However in his book, *Meltdown*, he gives a very complete account of both the credit expansion and the amount of government regulation that is the cause of this downturn. His insights are not that different from yours! He is just as opposed to this as you are!

Harry Veryser  
Royal Oak, Michigan

## MISSING THE ELEPHANT

Professor Rupert Ederer does well in elaborating Papal wisdom in "Pope Benedict XVI and the Failure of 'Oinkonomics'" (*Culture Wars*, March 2010), and I congratulate you on the title and cover! But as usual, Prof. Ederer misses the elephant in the living room, which if ignored will crush all his hopes. Therefore I will concentrate on the gaps in his argument.

The "iron law of wages... [that keeps] the wages of workers at bare subsistence" is inescapable if employment is the only option for most people. As the decline of unions (including Poland's glorious Solidarnosc) makes clear, bargaining, collective or otherwise, is impossible if there is no alternative. As a computer user, can you bargain about the Software License Agreement on a *necessary* computer program? No, you just hit the "Agree" button.

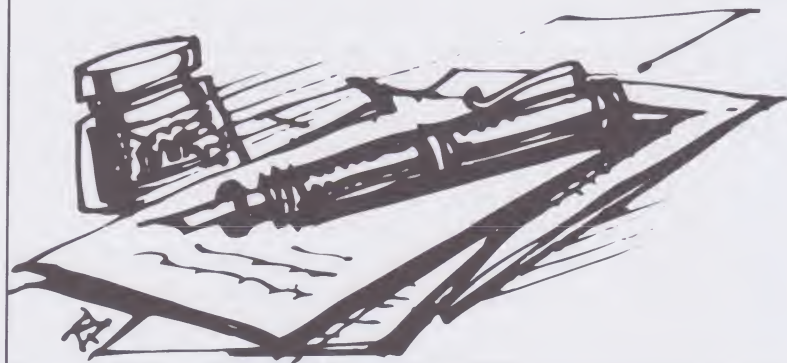
Be very clear, I do not mean "an alternative to employment with this employer," but "an alternative to employment at all." Otherwise you get, as actually quoted by Prof. Ederer, "powerlessness" (*Caritas in Veritate*, paragraph 25).

Therefore, if Professor Ederer sneers at "nostalgic distributism... agriculture... or self-employment at some craft", *then he must provide an equivalent alternative* or the conclusion is total despair. Please note that peasantry or self-employment at a craft is not "a return to humanity's original state" (which was a hunter-gatherer economy), but covers a vast variety of developed directions such

as computing co-operatives (Linux) and even Dutch-auction corporations with "Do no evil" in their charter (Google). The Chinese government is finding that this makes a difference.

When Professor Ederer says "[t]he working classes in any normally configured post-agricultural social economy constitute the preponderant majority of people who derive most of their income from their work", he is expressing a fatalism equivalent to Soviet-era "captive nationhood" with no hope of ever regaining freedom. The consequences of this fatalism are horrible. Con-

*Culture Wars* welcomes letters to the editor. Preference will be given to letters which deal with topics discussed in the magazine. Letters should ideally be limited to one single-spaced page, but we know how difficult it is to follow ideals in this world. Letters can be sent by mail to *Culture Wars*, 206 Marquette Ave., South Bend, IN 46617; by fax to 219-289-1461; or by electronic mail to [Jones@culturewars.com](mailto:Jones@culturewars.com).





template the summed human loss of all the families in South America, China, and other doomed countries walking from their manifold traditional cultures to the utter worldwide sameness of industrial servitude. No more beauty or human contribution, only "another day of fear and toil has come to Mordor" -- forever.

Pope Benedict XVI in *Caritas in Veritate*, on the other hand, sees beyond this fatalism to "commercial entities based on mutualist principles" (38) and "greater social responsibility on the part of businesses" (40). Linux and Google are examples of this, but it must be brought within the range of most people. The "binary model of market-plus-State" which Prof. Ederer implicitly accepts is, according to the Pope, "corrosive of society" (39). This is because of the "powerlessness" mentioned above (25). Read paragraph 39 in its entirety, because our task is "the creation of a model of market economy capable of including within its range all peoples and not just the better off", and it must be based on "reciprocal gift", not bossed peonage.

Lawrence J. Dickson  
La Jolla, California

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## TRUTH WILL OUT

To be honest, *Culture Wars* is an enigma to me; it's a magazine that defies easy classification. On one hand, I find *CW*'s excessive Jew-bashing not only tedious but bordering on the irrational. And then there's the nuttiness factor like 1) prior to the election essentially equating Barack Hussein Obama with John McCain on abortion, 2)

demeaning prolife activists like Father Frank Pavone, and 3) running articles saying Poland actually won WWII. All I can do is shake my head in wonderment in what goes on in the minds of those formulating such views.

But on the bright side, there are undeniably nuggets of insight in *CW* that make the subscription price well worth the cost. One such nugget was in "Love without Truth" (March 2010) where Mike Jones discusses the relationship between truth and charity.

Yes, as the article says, charity is often the excuse used to suppress certain uncomfortable aspects of the truth. But truth is not plastic; it is what it is. And when charity is used to modify the truth, this puts us on a slippery slope to where truth can not only be attenuated to smooth off what some consider its rougher edges but also to actually turn it inside out.

Here are some overt examples of what I mean. I'm sure with a little reflection, the readers of *CW* can easily come up with many more. Don't call abortion murder; it's a woman's right to choose. Homosexuals are not perverse; they're merely gays with an alternative lifestyle. Men and women aren't different; we're all the same, physiology notwithstanding. In many public schools, 'two plus two equals five' is not a wrong answer; it's a good try for which credit is given.

The common rationale behind these examples is that charity is needed to make sure nobody feels bad. But that's a fig leaf for we all know that the misuse of charity is not at all symmetric. It is poured out lavishly for progressives and libertines while charity is never allotted towards traditionalists and conservatives.

For instance, disagree with Obama, and you're a racist. Doubt man-made global warming, and you're flat-earthier, a denier. Question radical Darwinism, and you're an ignorant creationist, a Matthew Harrison Brady character straight out of *Inherit the Wind*. Ask your parish priest why he's ignoring church teaching on sexual morals, and you're escorted out the door as a troublemaker. Or as Mike Jones can testify, stand up for church teaching on abortion in a premier 'Catholic' university, and you're denied tenure while actual enemies of the church march to the top on an inside track.

The truth is hated. That is why the Old Testament prophets were stoned to death and why St. John the Baptist lost his head. It's why many a good man has left or been forced out of the priesthood. The noble Shakespeare said in *The Merchant of Venice* that "the truth will out." Yes, but unfortunately it often takes longer than our lifetime for that to happen. That is why those who stand for the unvarnished truth are heroes. They are fighting for something that is often vilified during their entire lifetimes, knowing their only vindication will likely be a posthumous one.

Peter Skurkiss  
Stow, Ohio

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## IS HISTORY CYCLICAL?

In refuting Michael Novak in his (or Locke's) contention that, as of capitalism, history was no longer to be regarded as cyclical (*CW*, February 2010), you question: "What man living in Europe(after Christ) would believe that history was cy-



clical?" Before Christ, Polybius (204-122 B.C.) knew that monarchy, by cyclic revolution, became "anarchical Democracy" from which a dissolving society could only be rescued by a return to monarchy (*Ancient Greek Histories* by J.B.Bury, p. 205). After Christ, Orestes Brownson (circa 1850 A.D.) had no doubt that history is cyclical when he wrote: "Never does a republic become a monarchy or a monarchy a republic without the virtual destruction of the state" (*Essays and Reviews*, p. 315). Brownson knew that pluralist religious anarchy would lead to socialist revolution and the return to monarchy. He said of pluralism: "The modern spirit... claims for man himself the authority to make the law. It asserts the universal and absolute supremacy of man, and his unrestricted right to subject religion, morals and politics to his own will, passion or caprice" (p. 308). G.K. Chesterton was no less observant in his *Christendom in Dublin*. He wrote of philistine pluralism's artlessness: "If a man is denied rapture and splendor, he will either wildly revolt or sadly die. And no one needs the experience of magnificence, of color, of exhilaration more than the poor."

Presently we see suicides of the young and an army of dumbed-down youth being prepared by anti-Christian schools, press, television and an abortionist government for the slaughter of Christians, we know how prophetic Chesterton was. Revolution occurs in the *dominant* country of its time. Historians tend to get lost in the details of less important countries and they often fail to distinguish revolution from war. The dominance and artistic

glory of the Periclean monarchy of Greece was destroyed by the revolutionary attack of Socrates upon the Olympian cult and its priests. He was the Luther of Greece and began the passage of its dominance to the pluralist republic of Ancient Rome. Myopic historians are still calling that revolution the Peloponnesian "War." If the cycle of history had teeth it would bite the historians to avoid the threatening slaughter of mutually-contradictory Christians their paralysis of coherent teaching of all nations must be ended. Christian unity must be restored and soon!

Daniel M. Canavan  
St. Albans, Maine

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### CLARIFICATION

What I meant to say was that no Christian could believe in a history that was exclusively cyclical, which is to say, limited to the round of the seasons, and going nowhere. Christianity has always asserted that history has a beginning, a middle, and an end. The fact that history has a goal does not exclude cyclical recurrence; it simply subordinates those cycles to a higher goal.

E. Michael Jones  
South Bend, Indiana

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### NEO-NAZI FABRICATIONS.

The family of this writer has always relished the arrival of *Culture Wars*. Generally it is seized by others and when, at last, it's held in this author's grasp, it's devoured within hours. The recent

kompozycja entitled: Poland the War Continues (March, 2010, pp. 2 – 6), was most amusing. It's appearance was commendable. It's dubious verba and innuendoes about other Europeans at first was deemed rather humorous. Rather than consider the countless tons of primary source data from the OKH, OKW or Wehrmacht, the author, Mr. Otward Mueller, bought the cherry picking of neo-Nazi fabrications. Mr. Mueller brings the CW readership from the Polsko-Soviet War, sometimes called the Catholic-Bolshevik Conflict, to today's Warsaw. How many of those advocating freedom of religion would appreciate his insinuation that Catholic Poles had nothing else to do than invade the Soviet Union?

After consumption of the above noted piece one's better half insisted a light effort would add to our CW's entertainment via material emanating from diplomatic chronicles, bureaucratic paper work and other records. As a long time reader of CW it's my duty to exert a few cerebral reflections on this topic. It has a bearing not only on Catholics, but all European Christians. Most folks insist that neo-Nazism died. It has few adherents, and they are looked at with distrust by mankind.. One wonders, however, after reading OM's intrinsic elicited thoughts, if it's not dead, but just smells funny. Also, exactly why do a minority of decent men still hold unpopular beliefs that have irrefutably been proven to be erroneous? This effort should elucidate much. It's goal is to present thoughts for a better understanding of Christian infighting.

The following *komunikat* carries Mr. Mueller's ball. It evolves from



the Eurocide of WWII to our contemporary times. It denotes more than a trifle about Catholic communities facing conflict. It also touches Hitler's *agresja* and is an overall rebuttal of the ethno assertions in the *composito verborum* of Mr. Mueller's rumination about kindred folk.

First of all, allow one to open this oratorio by stating that, as a youngster, a great deal of my intellectual *aklimatyzacja* was spent in NRD (East Germany). Many life-long friends were gathered and one came to love the German people as a whole. My job was doing translations and consultations for a think tank. I also supplied Western media with Iron Curtain news. For example, it was my translations, research and car that permitted Bonn's *Newsweek* *agencja*, East European Bureau Chief, Paul Martin, to provide worldwide info about JPIL. This was in 1978, when Krakow's Cardinal Wojtyla became Pope. That's a story in itself.

Young residents of Central Europe soon discovered that among the German intelligentsia, one could amusingly say, 110 percent recognized that the *Fuehrer* had been a disaster, not only for Tommy, Fritz and Ivan, but Europeans and mankind in general. Those following neo-Nazi propaganda and/or some of the beliefs indicated in Mr. Mueller's concepts, in many ways, are no different from the disciples of Senator John McCain. How many sheeple know that his father covered up the horrendous attack upon America's Liberty ship? How many have read how the Senator camouflaged his father's *akcja*?

It has to be emphasized that the German masses followed Adolf Hitler during a period of unemployment. Millions were either out of work, of the working poor, employed fewer hours than necessary, looking for work, or had given up. Perhaps they were similar in many ways to those who follow 'The Savior,' Sarah Palin? On one side of this coin we see that Hitler had thousands of Christian stations listening to him. He waved the bloody shirt, spoke of social issues (the jobless) and like President Truman of later years, indicated that health care was the right of every citizen. Books have been written about AH's cruise ships for the proletariat. This became a fraudulent scheme and reminds one of Goering's enterprises and his castle outside of Berlin.

The *raison d'être* for Palin being a darling of the TV/ media, is due to her belief that 1) the Israelis are God's chosen people and 2) that Israel has a right to bomb her neighbors (see *Guilt by Association*). She supports the global pariah and is in the political bed of neocon dual loyalists. She's the dream girl of those feeding at the *zydokracja* (Judeocracy) station.

As for character, unlike Palin, Hitler had no real work history. From the physical aspect, *medici* verified that he had a slew of acute abnormalities. It's also accurate to assert that he was an odd ball in normal sexual relationships throughout his life. Reading Eva Braun's diary and the reiterations of numerous generals it's easy to see why large numbers deemed him to be a closet queer. Yet, American COEs and political reps have proven, that such need not impede advancement.

Hitler's only success, prior to political power, was within WWI (as a corporal). In his day of war and economic depression he had a talent for lecturing. Of course, in our era, his shouting, screaming and banging upon a table could place him in the category of being impaired. However, as noted, back then he represented hope. What's really grappling is that an ocean of scholars have ever-so delicately suggested the Leader was a Jew.

Overall, Ashkenazis and Neo-Nazis don't delight in entering upon the fringes of Hitler's heritage and both groups openly deny that he was a Zydek. For obvious reasons these ardent enemies unite in this argument. Central and Eastern European academics know that crossing the Rubicon of Adolf's actual heritage could cost advancement. Only the most torrid of Nazis won't admit he spent a fortune having the area of his birth bulldozed.

My premise is that without the Fuehrer our WWII *infernus* would not have burnt. After Hitler's Italian Socialist Republic was created, many of the thousands of Italians killed would not have been arbitrarily shot. When the war was nearing completion the 212,000 German soldiers executed by the SS, to retain discipline, would have lived. The over 2,000,000 Russian POWs would not have been murdered in 1941/42. Read some of the works by General Franz Halder and officer memoirs relating to such *protokol*.

As for slave "employment," without the Fuehrer, over 500,000 Italians would not have been sent as forced labor to the Reich. Over 1,900,000 Poles, 2,000,000 Rus-



sians and other slaves would not have faced starvation diets and coerced demands.

Most acknowledge that the Fuehrer was a fanatical gambler. For example, he told his generals that if the French were to react to his occupation of the Rhineland, that they had to immediately retreat. Also, most of his elite generals were full of trepidation at his Czech war plans. When he invaded Poland he utilized similar fifth column endeavors that had proven effective against Czechs, and again gambled with the lives of Germans. The difference here being that he informed GB's Henderson and other elite Western politicians that Poles had been castrating Germans (see Henderson's war notes or Watt's *How War Came*). As for the 1939 invasion, he had few troops facing France. Had the disorganized French and English Allies marched in full force WWII would have ended in weeks (see *The Collapse of the Third Republic*). The Fuehrer was an uneducated gambler and initially lucky (to say the least).

Despite all of the above, one would occasionally run across an individual who defended Hitler policies. These people were rare birds. Most were decent, good, hard working proletarians. Often they were family members of those who had been part of the Hitler youth movement. Others remembered that their Fuehrer had accomplished miracles during the depression. He put impoverished millions to work in armament factories, building roads and constructing buildings. Society was grateful. He was a hero.

Some individuals, attempting to elicit favorable data about the

Reich's dictator would insist that he was even a tremendous artist. Certainly he could not be a complete zero. Thus, not being astute in this area, I asked a friend who was studying art at a prestigious university, if this were true. He answered my inquiry with a question about the visual quality of sidewalk drawings. It was soon realized that the famous Fuehrer was about as talented as those who paint in malls. Nothing less and nothing more. Judge for yourself. See his work in the research by Ada Petrova and Pete Watson ( *The Death of Hitler*). It's amateurish, not as decent as most first year art students, but quite good.

Residing in Europe and being a lover of political science, ethnicity and behavioral paradigms, one immensely enjoyed: 1) Researching diplomatic records; 2) Reading revisionist material; and 3) Comparing aggregated material with reactions induced by indoctrination. In the recent article composed by Mr. Mueller, there is reference to William Bullitt. Like Mr. Mueller I also read *Diplomat in Paris* (it's part of my library). Bullitt, married to the widow of journalist John Reed, was an accomplished American ambassador. It's also true that most of the elite within the Roosevelt administration comprehended one thing; America would eventually enter into the war officially on the side of the Allies. This was common sense. Only those suffering from Hitlerite myopia could relegate this to file # 13. At the time of Mr. William Bullitt's employment most of the State Department still consisted of individuals retaining WASP backgrounds. As for the author, Ambassador Lukasiewicz, Mr.

Mueller must have read that he had access to leading US and French politicians.

It's more than obvious that anyone attempting to engage in warfare against the US/ GB would have to be of dubious intelligence. This is especially true if one comprehends that Great Britain and the majority of European countries, including the Soviet Union, would eventually represent the opposition. Within two years, if a miracle knockout blow was not successful, Allied production would outstrip Berlin's wildest industrial dreams. One could only assume what revengeful repercussions could entail. It would take about two years for the US and USSR to outproduce Berlin by a scale of at least ten to one. An excellent DVD on WWII production and tanks is *The Battle of Kursk* (from The Allegro Corp. of Germany).

Those cunningly praising Adolf Hitler and his policies more often than not pull straws and extract material that does not represent the whole picture. In the case of Mr. Mueller, he writes about Poles taking German lands after the Versailles Treaty. Of course, anyone looking at maps prior to the petitions of Poland, will notice that for about eight centuries these lands belonged to the Polish state. In other words, they were only German for 123 years (during the partitional era). Also, Mr. Mueller has the *Weltanschauung* (outlook) of Nazis ignoring that within the so called Polish Corridor Slavs were the absolute majority.

If one studies the chronicles of diplomatic corps rather than revisionism or associating oneself with



neo-Nazi indoctrination, it's soon discovered that the Nazis took hundreds of thousands of Polish children from their mothers to be Germanized. This topic so fascinated me that during travels around Euro cities, including Warszawa, the sea of documentation pertaining to this mentality was set aside; I sought out personal contact with families suffering by this primitive inhumane act.

It was soon revealed that uncounted numbers of females were running to their local Catholic parish at all hours of the day. Why? In order to change church records. You see, children under three years old with blue eyes and blond hair were being taken from their mothers all over the country in mass! These babies were taken to Germany for Germanization. Perhaps this is okay if one thinks in terms of the *Ueberschuss*; that being different from Catholic morality.

I nearly composed a booklet on the above *Ueberschuss*/Untermensch baby policies. Only the intervention of German friends had me promise to shelve the idea. Enough was enough. Besides German generals were speaking out against the insanity of Hitler's ideology. Noting the above, one could add that it's *irracjonalny* how Mr. Mueller alludes to the ancient Polish city of Poznan as "Posen." Again, looking at a map one sees that for over 1,000 years the city was called Poznan. Why would he refer to it as Posen? This speaks volumes. It does not appear to be the lexicon of brotherhood.

It's fascinating that Mr. Mueller plays the ethnic cleansing card. Most comprehend, through actual bureaucratic and diplomatic records and not neo-Nazi revisionist propaganda

that the Nazis relocated nearly 2,000,000 Catholic citizens of Polish heritage who had resided on family property for centuries. Tens of thousands of Baltic *Volksdeutsch* replaced these Catholics.

Nazi atrocities included more than the eradication of the intelligentsia at the ancient Jagiellon university. Among the many home films in Slavic and Germanic languages one hears that Eastern Catholic priests were killed like flies by the Nazi regime. Only the most arrogant will deny or even attempt to repudiate the fact that numerous Hitler youth organizations sang songs denouncing priests while praising their dictator. This is an interesting part of documentary films recorded by Nazis themselves in Hitler worship (see *On the Road to Stalingrad*).

Mr. Mueller speaks of the Sudetenland Germans. I wrote papers on this. It is very sad that the Sudetenland Germans, numbering 2,600,000, were expelled after the war (see *Retribution against Nazi Collaborators in Postwar Czechoslovakia*). This writer broke bread with many of these fine people. It has to be realized that for centuries Czechs and Germans in the area had lived in brotherhood.

It was only through Hitler's incitement against the Slavic Czechs and his fifth columnists that the Czechs became frightened for the lives of their families. Mr. Mueller certainly must know that English, French and other diplomatic sources, including Washington's George F. Kennan, adequately noted that innocent Germans might face retaliation for the crimes committed by Nazis against innocent Czechs.

Would Mr. Mueller want to re-

fute the fact that all Czech schools of higher education and universities were closed? Figures differ about whether one thousand or 1,500 young students were simply shot. Whatever, it was real frightening for Czechs. Reinhard Heydrich reiterated that at the end of WWII at least half the inferior Czech population would have to be removed. The *kolosalny* Nazi crimes couldn't be hidden by *indoktrynacja* when Heydrich was assassinated. World media knew about the entire male population of Lidice and Lezaky being shot. On the eastern front over 200,000 Sudetenland Germans were killed for Hitler's dreams. Was any of this necessary? Mr. Mueller indicates that the ungrateful Czechs had it good. He tells us that they had full employment and plenty of food.

If one had the desire, nearly every item OM espoused to could be verified as erroneous. This does not mean that revisionism is completely ridiculous. Some excellent studies have been made into *verboten* realms. One can be thankful for revisionists identifying Ashkenazi exacerbations (see the excellent books by Jurgen Graf and Carlo Mattogno). However, most revisionists cherry pick, while leaving the main crop, when referring to Hitler's "diplomacy," treatment of Slavs and/or the end of 1943 to 1945. Those were the years when Hitler's miracle weapons were to be mass produced, to alter the inevitable. What's missing is vital info on the execution of over 212,000 mostly innocent German soldiers to keep AH's crazy wheels of conflict turning. This killing of deserters and others occurred while millions of German civilians suffered and died, as Hitler lived on. Read



books about Adolf's last days or his child soldiers. If you have any heart, it'll make you want to regurgitate.

One would think, if adjudicating by Mr. Mueller's standards, that the crimes inflicted by Nazis upon Christian nations and Catholic neighbors were mostly minor or fictitious. Yet, only the brainwashed or misinformed would try to equate the atrocities committed by Nazis to that of her neighbors. Could it be because of mindsets similar to Mr. Mueller that, after the nightmare of occupation, Czechs exploded in an orgy of violence? Well?

When it was recognized by the end of 1943 and in 1944, by all sane men, that Hitler could not win the war, every building in the ancient city of Warsaw was destroyed. Was this type of behavior one of the reasons why infuriated Allies bombed historical Dresden? How many know that two anti-Communist Hungarian divisions had to be withdrawn from Warsaw? Why? Because Catholic Magyars refused to participate in the undeniably barbaric Nazi primitivism. The post war *recordatio mentis* of generals note the deed also repulsed many in the Wehrmacht.

Perhaps it is not by accident that Mr. Mueller's *musica spiritualis* does not include the fact that out of nearly 6 million Russian POWs (6,000,000) only 2 million survived. *Die Russen* were murdered. This fact was conveniently overlooked by the West as it became engaged in a Cold War. President Truman and Ike hated Germans and figured they might be needed as Washington's cannon fodder. When I told a German-American

family member about this he wouldn't speak to me for months, and I am the godfather of his eldest son! His son married a Polish-American gal. So, why the animosity? Allegiance/ fidelity to ethnicity?

Few in the West know that masses of Russian POWs were simply shot. Most were placed in fields without medical care, food or adequate clothing. SS documentations reveal a desire to reduce these Eastern Catholic and Eastern Orthodox communities. Numerous diaries from German soldiers found this distasteful. They rejected participation but feared being shot as deserters (see Guy Sajer's *The Forgotten Soldier*). Generals in their post WWII books refer to this *Untermenschen* ideology as a horrendous mistake that alienated millions. Bureaucratic documentation indicate a dislike for many of these *Lebensraum* policies. Open field incarceration endeavors were copied by Washington's army of occupation. This resembled evil and unnecessary revenge.

Eventually the story of Nazis killing nearly a thousand Sudetenland Germans, for their rejection of Nazi occupation, will show that numerous decent Germans rejected *untersmenschen* ideology. Perhaps that's why no movies are made of these peace makers. A Sudetenland giant worth mentioning is Konrad Henlein. He was one of the most interesting figures in this region. Henlein was a successful politico on Hitler's fifth column Sudetenland payroll. What's not noted is that he really wanted to be President of Czechoslovakia. He became a pawn. In 1937-'38 his name filled news headlines. During the occupation he was pushed to

the sidelines. I read that after the war he was executed, but never checked it out.

Perhaps all of the misfortune would never have occurred if the assassination attempts to kill Hitler had been successful in the 1930s and 1940s. If that had been the case, the absurdity of *Lebensraum* would have only been within the dreams of those within insane asylums. The Nazi cold blooded murder of American POWs would not have occurred and innocent members of the Wehrmacht would not have had to face the price of retribution from furious Americans.

*Lebensraum?* The *Untermenschen?* One sees, if one studies early European migrations, that millions of Germanic folk migrated east and millions of Slavic people had settled in what is today's Germany and Austria. On the island of Rugen in the 16th century, it was not uncommon and readily recognized that a language similar to Polish was spoken by the majority of the population. This can be easily ascertained by internet fun pertaining to the history of Rugen. There's a reason why many of the geographical names in Germany are Slavic and mean nothing in German.

When one thinks about Eurocide crimes, *Untermenschen* policies and all the Nazi anti-Slavic propaganda posters that have survived, there's the thought of Field Marshal Eric von Manstein, who was originally Lewinski (1887-1973). What did he and countless others, who knew they had some Slavic blood, think? How many were astute enough to realize that, in reality, within the European ka-

(continued on p. 13)



# Culture of Death Watch



## The Pilgrim's Regress: "Weak-land" Revisited

"...All readers will be moved by this honest, riveting, and exceedingly well-written story of frustration and hope, sin and redemption. . ." -Notre Dame's Father Richard P. McBrien, from the book's jacket cover.

"As I was leaving [Pope John Paul II] suddenly asked me out of thin air: 'How old are you now?'... I interpreted it... as a way of saying, 'I guess I still have to tolerate you for four more years.'" - Archbishop Weakland, after his last ad limina visit to the Pope (*Pilgrim*, p. 389).

One does not have to be a member of the magisterium (or even a Notre Dame alumnus) to realize that when the first person to praise your memoirs is the lyin' liberal press's favorite sound-bite machine, Fr. Richard McBrien, that this is not going to be the spiritually enriching autobiography of a future saint. Furthermore, when the author himself, a self-described dissident homosexual archbishop, tells you that a pope who is up for sainthood could barely stand the sight of him, the orthodox Catholic reader has pretty much dismissed *A Pilgrim in a Pilgrim Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing,

2009) as his book of the month club selection. But while *Pilgrim* may be a popular choice for the "The Church needs married and woman (and gay) priests!" crowd, there is compelling reason for the faithful to read it too; for as a major player in the often faulty implementation of Vatican II, Weakland gives us a bird's-eye view of what went wrong—and exactly how "the smoke of Satan" entered the Church.

In his review for his Providence, Rhode Island, newspaper, Bishop Thomas J. Tobin, describes *Pilgrim* as "an intriguing combination of theology and gossip, Aquinas and

Oprah," and it doesn't take long to see what he means. After opening his autobiography with an self-righteous public confession of his sinful homosexual fling with Paul Marcoux (and the huge "hush money" scandal that surrounded it), Rembert returns to the beginning, his birth and childhood in Patton, Pennsylvania. It starts out as your typical large-Catholic-family tragedy inspirational depression era saga, although dissidence is never far from the surface. After losing his fortune in the financial crisis, George's father (George was Weakland's baptismal name; Rembert the name given him when he became an abbot) Basil "spent much time with his friends in the...unheated rooms...drinking and lamenting...he died [of] pneumonia the day before his 35th



birthday and the day after my fifth, leaving a wife and six children, the oldest nine, the youngest six months" (p. 24). But George's mother, Mary, vowed to keep her kids together, and despite few funds, scant food and little heat, the faith in this close-knit family helped them not only to survive, but thrive.

Whether Weakland learned his same-sex attraction during childhood is debatable, there's little doubt his penchant for disagreeing with Church teaching was. Weakland's lament, "that much of my life was spent seeking the father figure that had been there so briefly" (p. 26), may be a factor in some of his illicit adult relationships, to his depiction of his mother as "a woman of deep faith," but with "an independent mind with regard to some positions the Church took" (p. 32), certainly shows the roots of his own dissidence. Later, when George became attracted to the priesthood, he was sent away after the eighth grade to St. Vincent Prep School (Latrobe, PA) to continue his studies. However, when he returned that summer and told his mother the disturbing story of a priest who had been dismissed from St. Vincent after sexually molesting several students, "she surprised me with one remark; 'Well, I hope your own first sexual experiences will be beautiful and the outcome of deep love.' On reflection, I think she was saying something that I had not fully grasped; [but] I did not have the vocabulary or the courage then to talk to her about homosexuality" (pp. 46-7).

If the almost complete absence of teaching about human sexuality (either normal or disordered) at

the seminary must sadly be excused as part of the culture of the day, the dissident teaching that went on in St. Vincent certainly cannot. Unsure of himself, and still frightened of the sexual abuse that happened to his classmates, Weakland vowed to avoid "the sewing circle" crowd and submerged "any homosexual desires as deeply as I could" (p. 46). Weakland, always a top-notch student, did well in the studies of Latin, Greek, Science, and English Literature, but proved even more gifted at music, and was eventually sent to Julliard to complete advanced studies in piano. Still, as well rounded as this education was, sound theology apparently was not always a part of it. "During Lent," recalls Weakland, "the ordained monks all spent long hours in the confessional. Questions about contraception [were] raised. . .most of

quickly rose through the Monastic ranks, first becoming archabbot of St. Vincent's in 1963, consultant to the Consilium on liturgical music changes due to Vatican II in 1964, and lastly, the abbot primate of the entire Benedictine Order in 1967. It was as abbot primate that Weakland became a frequent and influential visitor of Pope Paul VI. Recounting these meetings, Weakland confirms what conservatives long feared; that Paul, in an attempt to befriend everyone (the pope often prepared several "Benedictine trivia" questions for Weakland before they got down to business!) allowed his young liberal advisors far too much leeway in setting the post Vatican II agenda before he attempted to curb Pandora's box of relativism he had created. "Instead of giving into one side or the other, Paul tried to keep peace

## Weakland gives us a bird's-eye view of how "the smoke of Satan" entered the Church.

us were reluctant to recommend the rhythm method since we had seen many instances when it did not work . . . and it seemed dishonest since the intention of preventing pregnancy was the same as if artificial means were used. We advised penitents to look carefully at the Church's teaching, then decide in their own consciences what . . . was right. We had been instructed that the [layperson's] individual conscience should be respected" (p. 92).

Having mastered this democratic, conscience-is-king tabloid version of Catholicism, Weakland

by creating parallel bodies [of] conservative and forward-looking cardinals. . . to avoid schism in the Church. His fear, coupled with an innate wish not to offend anyone. . . alienated his most loyal supporters and collaborators" (p. 220). In the end, Weakland's analysis that Paul's personal views shifted is incorrect; his issuing of *Humanae Vitae* was a courageous stand against the Modernist mob, not a "cave in" to conservatives as Weakland suggests. Still, if Paul realized (too late) that "The smoke of Satan has entered the temple of God" (from the pope's famous



1972 homily), Paul did not grasp the perhaps even greater firestorm he created by appointing Weakland (and several of his less-than-orthodox contemporaries) bishop shortly before his death.

Unlike a monk, Weakland realized a bishop is called upon to make statements on doctrine, and the new archbishop of Milwaukee wasted no time in issuing outrageous statements on everything from women's ordination to the practicing homosexual's right to worship. Quick to grasp the situation, John Paul's visits with Weakland were anything but trivial. "On every ad limina visit without exception," says Weakland, "I would be singled out to meet with Cardinal Baggio (later Cardinal Bernadin Gantin and toward the end of his tenure Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger) where I would be presented with a list of complaints" (p. 264). The meetings with John Paul himself (as depicted in the opening quote) were rather quick and to the point, as John Paul did not waste much time on fools, or at least bishops who were fooling themselves. It is interesting to note their different take on these meetings; Weakland depicting "a professor... snidely correcting a less than gifted student" (p. 307), while John Paul recalling (in his book *Rise, Let Us Be On Our Way*) [here] there can be no turning one's back upon the truth...no room for compromise to human diplomacy." I suppose it is the difference of one who began his bishopric with a pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa, and ended with the people proclaiming him "The Great" saint, and another who began his tenure with a gay affair and

ended his ministry by resigning in disgrace because of it.

While I agree with Bishop Tobin's review that we should not overlook Weakland's many redeeming qualities (for example, his fight to bring the vernacular of the Divine Office to some Benedictine sisters who didn't understand Latin over the protest of the abbess who declared, "They don't need to understand the prayers since God does!" seems commendable), Tobin's observation that the book is filled with "self-serving inconsistencies and contradictions" cannot be ignored either. To name just a few, Weakland is quick to point out in the quoted passage that the rhythm method taught in the '50s wasn't so reliable, but fails to mention that the Billings Method taught today is, or that Church teaching (from his favorite, *Humanae Vitae*) shows that natural family planning maintains the bond between the unitive and the procreative, whereas contraception does not. Later, he depicts John Paul as "beyond doubt, a holy man, worthy of being officially recognized by the Church," but then flippantly refers to JP's reign as "that overly long...burdensome pontificate" (p. 402), despite having just finished writing that his bout with prostate cancer gave "me a growing empathy for the sick" (p. 380). And finally, Weakland claims to have decided to pay the \$450,000 "hush money" to quiet his gay affair because the Vatican advised him that would keep the Church from scandal, but in doctrinal matters, Weakland rarely listened to Rome, and seemed to revel in the scandal that his heretical statements caused.

Thus if Weakland's story does to a

large extent truthfully (if unwittingly) depict the faulty seminary training of the '40s and '50s, the improper implementation of Vatican II in the '60s and '70s, and slow and often misguided response to the priest sex scandal of the '80s, '90s and early 2000s, Weakland seems incapable of grasping eternal truths concerning his own soul. Since the book's release, Weakland has admitted to several other homosexual affairs, bragging to Laurie Goldstein of *The New York Post* that he was the first bishop to come "out of the closet," adding, "How can [the Church] tell 400 million gays that you have to pass your whole life without any physical genital expressions of love!" If Pilgrim has proved the need for the Church's further definitions on married sexuality and the priestly celibacy, Weakland's retirement rants have shown the need for further definition of the nature of homosexuality beyond the Catechism's, "Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained" (CCC 2357). For if it is largely learned, it can then be unlearned, but it is mostly innate (as Weakland believes and the Catechism's, "They do not choose their homosexual condition..." does not condemn), then a different strategy to keep gays from giving in to these "intrinsically disordered acts" (CCC 2357) must be developed, because to witness this retired bishop reduced to a dirty old man, preaching "grave depravity" as true love is beyond sad. Let us pray that if Rembert does not repent, he at least resigns his title of bishop, so that no further faithful are lost due to his reprehensible rhetoric.

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**TOM O'TOOLE**



## LETTERS, CONT'D FROM P. 9

leidoscope, Slavs are nothing more than a linguistic group? Even those of us that are Catholic!

Mr. Mueller's negativity about Catholic Poles stopping the Communist invasion of Europe is overall beyond the scope of cultural Christian penmanship. He notes that Poland "had nothing better to do than attack and invade the Soviet Union." A famous Frenchman of the diplomatic corps wrote a book entitled something like The 18th Decisive Battle of the World. Trotsky and his cohorts had set up military plans to occupy Germany and France. Berlin was full of strife and Communists were striking and gaining undeniable increasing power. Apparently Herr Mueller wished the Reds had won. If Catholics had not stopped the Communists today we would not have to worry about Western institutions.

As for Mr. Mueller's innuendo about Warsaw's support for the Ashkenazi induced Iraqi war, it's almost laughable. Perhaps Mr. Mueller didn't know that hundreds of thousands of Catholics, in that city alone, demonstrated against Poland participating in Bush's neocon war.

Perhaps he doesn't know that Paul Wolfowitz went to Warsaw and had meetings with fellow Ashkenazis to implement the plans of Richard Perle, Douglas Feith and other Pentagon advisory personnel? Who did Wolfowitz confer with? Well, to reduce typing time, it might suffice to comment on Poland's President, Kwasniewski (Stolzman).

"Kwasniewski's" father, Izaak Stolz-man, was a graduate of the

NKVD's major institute. His diploma has been shown all over Europe (see <http://polonica.net/kwasniewski-stolzman.htm>). Izaak Stolzman, as a Homeland Security type official, tortured several Catholic activists. Izaak's son, Kwasniewski, was put into power due to what we Americans have become accustomed to: Ashkenazi Media.

Poland's equivalent of the *New York Times* is *Gazeta Wyborcza*. It's run by Adam Michnik (Shekter). Adam's brother, Stefan, was a Judge. After having Catholic officials executed he fled to Sweden (Michnikowszczyzna, Zapis Choroby). This was during the short period in which Moczar gained control of the UB (Secret Police). Michnik's brother, Stefan, changed his name to Swedowicz. All this is about the generational Ashkenazi oligarchy.

As far as post WWII Warsaw behavior goes, evidently Mr. Mueller does not comprehend or care what happened to Catholics. For his information, after 1944 Catholics had no say in the actions of their government. Stalin sent approximately 500,000 non-Catholic Ashkenazis to govern and direct Warsawian affairs. Berman and his cohorts placed countless thousands in cells.

Tens of thousands of Catholics were beaten nearly to death. One of my doctoral professors, Tad Przeciszewski, a Catholic activist, was incarcerated for suggesting that Catholic schools remain open. He was physically beaten for publishing a periodical similar to our *Culture Wars*. Upon release he became one of the most diplomatic

of scholars. He would have never dared to pen anything similar to the 1,200 page study conducted by Dr. E. Michael Jones. However, his Catholic graduate students were privately educated on the implications of the transnational generational Ashkenazi oligarchy and its networking. Tad might not have been as well known as Dr. E. Michael Jones, but he was a champion of society. He worked for understanding and sought peace and good will for mankind. He also gave hundreds of students the keys for studying the *verboden*.

It's kinda funny reading about Mr. Mueller's statement pertaining to Warsaw, Rockets and Putin. Evidently he only hazily sees or comprehends the generational Ashkenazi oligarchy. Mr. Sikorski, formerly of the American Enterprise *neokonski* think tank and married to the internationally famed journalist Applebaum, had the greatest influence in Warsaw's foreign affairs.

The Slav is not the *diabolus* that Mr. Mueller makes him out to be. It's more than probable that less than 3 percent of Germans dislike Polonians. One doesn't know if Otward Mueller can be weaned from loathing fellow Europeans. However, there are bigger fish in the sea than the Czechs and Poles. It wasn't the Slavs that give a pariah nation nuclear subs to endanger humanity. We Polonians use to have a saying: "*Sila eskimosow jest dzieki walcenia miedzy innymi.*" Or, the strength of the Eskimos is due to the infighting of others.

B. Chapinski  
bchapinski@me.com



# Rapacious Usury: Fact or Fiction?

by Garrick Small

A rapacious usury, although often condemned by the Church, but practiced nevertheless under another form by avaricious and grasping men, has increased the evil; and in addition the whole process of production as well as trade in every kind of goods has been brought almost entirely under the power of a few, so that a very few rich and exceedingly rich men have laid a yoke almost of slavery on the unnumbered masses of non-owning workers. Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* 6, 1891

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## INTRODUCTION

The economic system of the pre-modern Christian world was based on three institutions very different to the economic world of today. The three institutions were property, just price, and the use of money. Between them they returned the highest level of wages compared to the cost living that has been experienced in the last seven centuries (Rogers 1884). Relative wage levels indicate the level of social cohesion, of solidarity, something that is not conveyed by GDP per capita, the more recent quantifier of economic success. The three economic institutions were not unique to pre-modern Christendom. Various aspects of them are shared by other cultures, both historically and in the world today. In the West, modernity swept them away as it overtook Europe through the 16th century.

Each of these three institutions operated within a moral doctrine. The use of money was informed by the moral prohibition of usury. Usury has endured as perhaps the most controversial of these ancient economic doctrines. Medieval moral thought condemned usury as a mortal sin and the Council of Trent dealt with usury as a major head under the sin of theft. The only papal encyclical specifically on usury, *Vix Pervenit* (1745) denounced it unequivocally, and Leo XIII railed against the economic world of late 19th century as racked by rapacious usury.

Contrary to this clear denunciation, the 20th century developed the view that the Church had changed its mind on usury. John Noonan's work on usury treats it as more of a Scholastic scruple, as some sort of extortive excess, seldom encountered in practice (Noonan 1957). This is a far cry from the position of St. Peter Canisius who refused absolution to German bankers who would not make restoration for their usurious gains (Broderick 1939). Today, few Catholic scholars are so bold as to admit publicly their agreement with Leo XIII concerning the recognition of usury in modern society. A 1994 publication of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace included not one, but two statements to the effect that the Church's position had changed, one by the writer of the preface and the other by the author of the main text (deSalins and deGallhau 1994).

Some have taken this view as proof that the moral order evolves. The change in the moral status of usury is cited as a precedent for the supposed moral enlightenment now deemed appropriate for contraception, homosexuality and other Catholic doctrines inconvenient to modern Western culture. Usury itself resides within economic relations, but the implications of a change in any part of the Church's essential moral teaching has widespread implications. If the teaching on usury can change, then any part of the doctrinal and moral teaching of the Church can also change. Depending on how the change is understood, it may even threaten the very philosophical roots of Christian thought. Classical realism, the general foundation for all reliable scientific understanding relies on the constancy of form. If usury was essentially an evil thing,

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Garrick Small, Ph.D. is a professor of economics in the Department of Property Economics at the University of Technology Sydney in Sydney, Australia.





and now it is not, then its form has changed. If forms change then it is pointless basing your philosophical method on the assumption that they do not. There is much at stake here.

Usury is commonly understood as interest on money loans. This is a reasonable though hazardous approximation. Usury is more accurately any return to the vendor of a thing beyond what is entitled. Its association with interest on money loans is based on the belief that interest on money loans represents just such an excessive return in its purest form. Usury can occur in other transactions as the excess that the vendor earns above the just price of a good. In general commerce, it is often unclear what the just price is, hence the usury component may be unintentional and unknown. In the case of money loans this is not the case. In the absence of external factors, such as risk, and inflation, the just price of money is its own value, and the repayment of anything more than the principal of a loan was considered pure usury.

It is easy to see, for example, that risk constitutes a reasonable ground for expecting an extra margin in any payment. A margin or charge for risk is like an insurance premium that if correctly priced does not earn a profit for the vendor of a thing, but only prevents

loss. If the interest charge is partly to cover risk, then that part can be accepted as licit. Likewise, inflation results in the value of the money returned not being equal to the value of the money lent and gives rise for another component of licit compensation to the lender. Once these licit costs are deducted from the interest rate then the remainder, the pure interest charge, would appear to be indefensible usury. As deliberate theft committed purely for personal gain at the expense of another, usury was considered serious sin in the Catholic Church and could only be absolved after the usurer made restitution.

There are several lines of philosophical argument that lead to the immorality of usury and it is worth exploring their general thrust. They all lead to the conclusion that the owner of money has title to the value of the money, and no more. If the lender of money insists on a payment in excess of the value that is licitly the lender's, then that person is insisting on receiving a payment for something that is not his in the first place. The language of usury relies heavily on this concept of title. The lender is said to have title to the value of money, but no title to interest. Usury is immoral because the lender has no intrinsic title to a return above the value of the money lent.

**Some have taken this view as proof that the moral order evolves but the implications of a change in any part of the Church's essential moral teaching has widespread implications.**

This may be contrasted to what are referred to as extrinsic titles to return. These are titles that the lender may have to other, separate, returns that are independent of either the value of the loan, or the pure interest. Risk has been cited an example of an extrinsic title.





## THE STERILITY OF MONEY

The first person to provide a reasoned rejection of intrinsic title to pure interest on a money loan was Aristotle. His argument was based on the fact that money was sterile, that it was unproductive (Aristotle 1981). If I were to lend you a cow, it would produce milk for you. In simply being, it provides for some human want. If I lend you a house, it likewise provides shelter, so in mere possession, you benefit on an ongoing basis, above the value of the cow or the house, which may be returned at a future time unchanged. The owner has title to both the cow and the fruit of the cow and hence may expect in loaning the cow both the cow back and an additional payment for the product of the cow; likewise with the house. The natural productivity of the asset gives the owner an intrinsic title to a return in excess of its sale price, or value.

Close reflection on the nature of money reveals that it is not naturally productive. Money does not directly sate any human want, so it cannot claim a return in excess of its value. Most modern people object to this because they are aware that money does produce a return when invested in a bank account. But what if this return is usury and immoral, and only begs the question? Where does the bank get the money to pay its depositors interest? The bank earns interest by lending its money to borrowers who willingly pay interest for the opportunity to use money that they do not own. Willingness to pay is not equivalent to a just title to receipt. A person dying of thirst in the desert is freely willing to give a fortune for a drink of water, just as shopkeepers were willing to pay insurance money to

the Mafia in the USA to avoid harm to their property and persons. It is not only Christian charity, but justice that can be shown to be violated by such demands. However, Richard Weaver (1948, p.55) recognised that our current culture models itself on just such relations, making it difficult for us to see beyond our cultural parochialism. Understanding usury requires moving above our cultural background to reflect, not on willingness to pay, but on right to demand a price.

The apparent answer to the origin of bank interest is that borrowers use their loan money to buy useful things, like houses or businesses. The loan enables the borrower to access something useful and productive, therefore they are indebted for the whole benefit derived from the loan. For example, I borrow to buy a house. I become the owner of a house and I no longer have to pay rent for my accommodation. The value of the house represents the principle of the loan and the extra benefit I gain, in the form of the avoidance of rent, justifies the payment of interest. This line of thought is so familiar to us that it seems irrefutable evidence that prudent borrowing is productive and justifies an obligation to pay interest.

Closer examination reveals that it is the house that is productive, not the money loan. A prudent borrower quickly converts the money loan into something else, something that is not money, because money essentially does not do what a house or a business asset does. Money cannot house, clothe or shelter us and it is not like a machine that can produce useful things. Marx was content that because money could be converted into a productive asset, then it was itself productive (Marx 1957), but a little thought shows this false. There is a massive and essential difference between money and what money will buy. Consider in the previous example what happens when the house burns down. If the borrower borrowed money, then the loan would still stand, and interest and principle would have to be paid in addition to the borrower's continued need for accommodation. If the borrower had borrowed the house directly, then loss would be far more tolerable, though not for the lender.

The elegance of loaning money is that it avoids exposure to the risks associated with the productive assets themselves. The borrower always enters the relationship from the weaker position, and always risks the possibility of being further weakened to the point of bankruptcy. The way that borrowers are exposed to



potentially devastating outcomes is apparently why the ancient Hebrews prohibited loans between fellow Jews, but allowed lending, at interest, to the gentiles<sup>1</sup>. They knew that "The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender" [my emphasis] (Prov. 22:7). Lending was recognised as a means of weakening or enslaving the borrower, as effective, but far easier, than fighting with them.

There is a common belief today that money became productive somewhere in the 19th century, or perhaps even earlier, as a result of developments in the financial organisation of the West. This has a certain historical validity, as the late 19th century saw the widespread introduction of joint stock companies, the liberalisation of lending and a great degree of internationalisation of financial dealings. The opportunities for investment and gain from financial dealings exploded, giving the appearance that money investments were simply productive. Money had apparently changed in essence from an inert useless thing, into something that had a great power of its own. Such a change would be like a grain of sand becoming a flea, or lead becoming gold. In fact what happened was that the rules of business had not changed, only the diffusion of usury had exploded through the business world and in response the business world refined and developed its understanding of its mechanics,

consumptible good. This gives rise to the consumptibility argument for usury and may be found in St. Thomas's *Summa Theologica* (1981, II-II, Q.78). This argument is usually explained using another quality of money as well, the fact that money is fungible. This means that money is measured only by number or quantity; that it does not matter which coins, notes, or other media are used, so long as they sum to the same amount then there is equal value.

These two qualities of money are important when it is loaned. The borrower uses the money up, which is all that can be done with it, and then eventually repays the loan with different coins, notes, or whatever. If I loan something and the thing consumed in its use by the borrower, then I can expect repayment equal to the restoration of the equal amount of the thing. If I lend you a bottle of wine, or six eggs, I would reasonably expect a bottle of wine, or the six eggs in return, even though I would not expect the exact same wine or eggs. I would know that the reason you had borrowed them would have been to consume them, and that their value is wholly in the benefit they confer in being consumed. The use value of the wine is its only value, and when it is used up, its value is exhausted, though the obligation to repay the loan remains. In loaning the wine I have denied myself the opportunity of consuming it myself, but that consumption could

only ever happen once, not on some ongoing basis forever. When my debtor gives me a bottle of wine in return, then my opportunity to consume it is reinstated in full. This is what happens when money is used. It is always consumed by being exchanged for something else.

If I own \$100, it has the value of \$100 sitting on the shelf, or

the use value of being able to be consumed in the act of buying \$100 worth of something else. There are two ways I can dispose of the money, I can sell it to somebody for its value of \$100, say by changing a note for coin, or I can use it, in which case I enjoy \$100 of use value before the sum is exhausted. Once the money is gone, used up, it cannot be used more.

Imagine that today I lend you \$100 to be repaid in a year. Unless you leave it under your bed, you will probably spend it to buy something. Once spent, you cannot use the money anymore, for it is gone, though

**The elegance of loaning money is that it avoids exposure to the risks associated with the productive assets themselves.**

generating first the science of positive economics and later the technology of finance.

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## THE CONSUMPTIBILITY ARGUMENT

Even if money had changed its nature, which it has not, the sterility argument is not the central argument against usury<sup>2</sup>. The major difficulty with usury is the fact that, even if money were in some way productive, it is consumed in being used; it is what is known as a



you may enjoy the thing bought. You have used \$100 worth of my money and since it is a fungible, I expect only a comparable quantity of money in return. Regardless of whether you repay me in a day or a year, you will never get any more use from my money. You may now own a productive asset, but you no longer have the money. The money can do you no more good because it is gone. All that remains is your obligation to repay what you have used, and used up, of mine — \$100. The wait that we may have agreed before my \$100 is returned is immaterial. You have benefited by \$100 of spending power, no more. I have given you \$100 of use value, and you owe me \$100 in use value in return. St. Thomas Aquinas said, and the Church has always agreed, that if I expect not only the use value, but also the sale price as well, then I am effectively selling the same thing twice. Usury is this double sale; it is theft.

There are other arguments against usury as well. One is the abhorrence of selling the future, of selling time. This should be distinguished from the sale of some good that is realised over time, such as shelter from a house, or wages to a sentry, who does nothing but stand at a gate for a time. To sell time for no more reason than its passing is to sell something that belongs to everyone in common, or that perhaps belongs rightly to God alone.

Another argument for the immorality of usury comes from Aristotle and is based on the teleology of money, its purpose. Aristotle observed that money had three purposes. It serves as a medium of exchange, a store of value and an indicator of worth. In each of these roles, money is a good, it helps humans to flourish, but none of them justify a fee to the owner. In sum, the various arguments focus on what money is, how it works and the just basis for ownership. Some arguments are not conclusive in themselves, some rely on characteristics of money that do not always hold, but accepting the method, they combine to convey an understanding of money that shows that the immorality of usury is deductively certain. It is not a positive construct of a particular culture or religion, but a fact of nature.

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## EXTRINSIC TITLES

This does not exhaust all claims by a lender to more in return for a money loan than its face value. The

Scholastics recognised extrinsic titles to returns. These are not due to the loan simply, but due to other external factors. For example, if I lend eleven people \$10 each, but experience has shown that one person in such a group will probably default repayment, then I may insist on asking for repayments of \$11 from each of my debtors. I have not charged interest, but have only covered the damage that is likely to emerge from my habit of lending to those in need. All going well, I still only expect to recover \$110, which is my due. This particular extrinsic title was referred to as *damnum emergens* and included compensation for any damages or costs that accrued as a result of lending.

Similarly, in some cases the act of lending may cause me a loss, such as in the case of lending money that I normally use in my business to replenish stock. As a result of my loan, my business income will be reduced. This is a case of income ceasing as a result of my lending and gives rise to the extrinsic title known as *lucrum cessans*. There are other extrinsic titles. Risk, inflation, and lost opportunity are contemporary situations that would constitute extrinsic titles to a return above the principle of a loan. They always have the characteristic of being related to either risk, or some other probable loss to the lender. The fact that a loan prevents a lender from obtaining an alternate usurious income is not an extrinsic title.

In condemning usury, the Church has never condemned extrinsic titles following from the loan. In practice, interest payments on loans are usually a combination of illicit usury and licit charges for extrinsic titles. In Medieval times, with a simpler economic environment, usury would have composed the major part of the interest payment and the condemnation of bank loans would have been largely valid. Today, the balance is probably different, and certainly more complex. This largely explains the Church's apparent change in the treatment of usury. When Pope Benedict XIV wrote on usury in *Vix Pervenit*, usury was denounced as evil, but the pope wisely pointed out that extrinsic titles must be recognised and respected. The encyclical pointed out that the question of extrinsic titles had not been adequately explored at that time, making it impossible for the Church to make pronouncements on specific actual cases of interest charge. Instead, the responsibility for identifying usury was thrown back on secular authorities and the position was adopted that if a community allowed a particular practice, then the Church would not con-



demn it until it understood the matter better. The Church appears to have retreated from judging the existence of usury in specific economic relations, leaving it to individuals, secular authorities, and perhaps economists, to judge cases and develop understanding further.

Other issues were also dealt with in *Vix Pervenit*. It had been common practice to distinguish between loans for consumption and loans for production, and also on the situation of the borrower. It had been common to permit interest charges for loans for productive purposes, and also loans to persons who were well off. In the first case it was argued that the lender deserved to participate in the productiveness that the loan facilitated, and in the second, that the borrower had no need of the loan, only a whim, hence could be expected to pay for the convenience. Pope Benedict dismissed both of these cases. The encyclical also mentioned licit investment of money, but warned that excess income even on these may be usurious and illicit.

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## USURY IN EUROPEAN HISTORY

It has been objected that *Vix Pervenit* was directed only to the bishops of Italy, and therefore could not be held as a definitive papal statement on the matter. This implies that the prohibition of usury in Christendom was only a creature of Medieval philosophical whim and a local issue. While usury was a major issue in the Medieval period, various Councils from as early as the fourth century had consistently sanctioned interest charges, both for clerics and laymen. It appears to have been a consistent teaching of the Church from the earliest times. The contribution of the Middle ages was a stricter and better thought out position on the practice.

Even so, Medieval Europe had a banking industry, but it was shrouded in moral apprehension. Banking was closely associated with trade and it was complicated by many complex arrangements designed to disguise the underlying existence of interest charges. These included a device known as the triple contract, often referred to as the *Contractus Germanicus*. This involved several concurrent contracts that had the net effect of returning to the provider of money an amount in excess of the investment, apparently connected with licit commerce, but including an insurance arrangement that removed any risk. Loans were

also available from Jews who permitted lending to gentiles. From the Christian perspective of the time, there was plenty of demand for loans and since the Jews were outside the realm of Christian salvation, their usury could not further harm them.

Henry VIII was the first Christian monarch to legislate a licit level for interest on loans, setting 5 percent as allowable (Goyder 1993). As the Protestant revolt swept Europe, the prohibition of usury was swept away in its wake (Langholm 1984). The Protestant mindset was formed partly as a revolt against the economic ordering of Christendom and had no place for moral argument as subtle as that against usury. Although Luther was not in favour of usury himself, his *sola fides* doctrine was easily turned to the conclusion that if one was not saved by works, then one would not be damned by them either. Calvin was more aggressive in supporting the merchant class that included bankers and developed arguments in support of interest taking that provided the *carte blanche* for bankers.

Christian states tended to follow suit, probably under political and commercial pressure. The removal of secular restrictions on interest-taking was not necessarily an abrogation of the underlying moral, especially as extrinsic titles were becoming more widely recognised. They did place pressure on the Church's ability to maintain its stand.

Late scholastic thought included several thinkers who provided arguments, or held positions, in support of usury. Chafuen provided an outline of these and the arguments put forward in support of accepting usury on money (Chafuen 1986). It is noteworthy that the arguments all revolve on the unacceptability of prohibiting the practice. They are also made by persons who Chafuen described as being on the very liberal edge of the thought of their times. Normally an argument from popular opinion, or even common practice is considered the weakest of all in logic, if not a mere fallacy.

These arguments are predominantly composed of variations on the pleas that commerce is hampered by denial of access to debt funds, or that both borrowers and lenders freely desire access to interest-bearing loans. The first ignores the fact that lenders could invest as equity partners, the morality of which has never been questioned—there is nothing that can be achieved with debt funds that cannot be done with equity, except for pure financial manipulation of profits. The



second is a red herring as an argument for the moral acceptance of usury. A community's hunger for some practice is not grounds for its moral acceptance.

What may be learned from these arguments is that they seldom attack the conclusions drawn from the intrinsic natures involved, but rather argue from popularity and personal benefit, sometimes disguised as social benefit. The unfortunate reality has been that countries that abandoned the three Christian economic institutions experienced spectacular economic growth, although the most outstanding example, England, was initially boosted considerably by its national policy of piracy, especially against the Spanish. Economic growth does not necessarily equate with justice, or with the common good, but it does provide a very attractive model that entices others to follow. This is but one of the banker's enticements. It has been sufficient to move most Western countries to permit banking, first on a limited basis, but progressively more liberalized.

Today, the idea that there is a threshold above which loans are usurious is for all practical purposes an effective way of rendering the issue meaningless, if not forgotten. No one today would seriously include usury in an examination of conscience, as if usury is no longer encountered in the modern world. This being the case, we are left to wonder at Pope Leo's belief that it was a major widespread problem in the West.

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## TWENTIETH CENTURY THOUGHT

The topic that has interested economists over the last century has not been the usury threshold of interest rates, but simply how to account for the charge of interest itself. This is a useful practical question that has shed considerable light on the problem of usury, though without economists realising it. Irving Fisher suggested that interest rates were a kind of impatience premium on money (Fisher 1930/1977). We have already seen how this degenerates into an exploitation of the borrower's need or desire, their desperation, or their concupiscence. Fisher also believed that interest existed as a by-product of profit and was justified as participation in some proportion of the profit that was to be made due the availability of funds.

John Maynard Keynes grappled with the origin of interest and his views changed through the course of his writings. He is usually held to believe that interest

is a kind of participation in economic growth. On this basis he recommended borrowing in the present in order to stimulate growth in the future, producing a kind of temporal equation of money value through interest. In his later writings, Keynes's thinking was the exact opposite of Fisher. He believed that the rate of interest was purely a positive social construct that actually produced the rate of profit as a dependent effect. Keynes apparently came to believe that the base rate of interest for a community is simply and ultimately that rate which it finds acceptable, a sort of political or psychological balance between the various players. Carlo Panico extended this suggestion, finding that many other major economic theorists recognised this priority of interest as the fundamental rate within an economy (Panico 1988). Finance theory appears to confirm it.

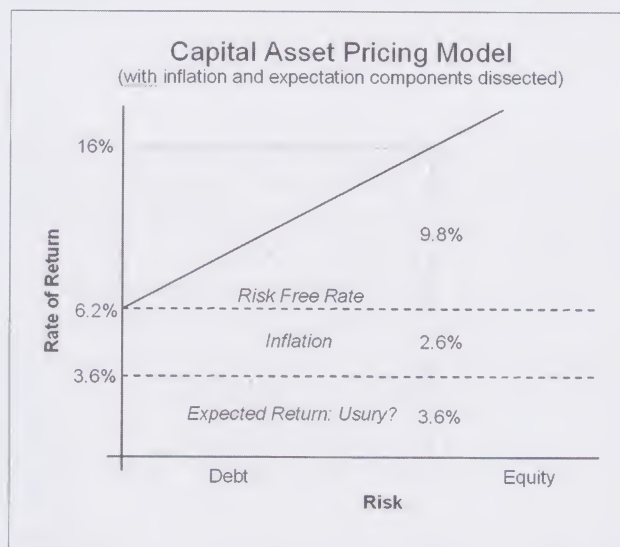
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## FINANCE THEORY

Most current finance texts offer considerably simpler explanations of the origin of interest by way of a set of empirical interest theories. These usually include the risk premium theory, the inflation premium theory, the liquidity theory and the expectation theory of interest. Each of these explains a part of a given interest rate. The risk premium theory suggests that the more risky a loan is to the lender, the higher the interest rate will be. It suggests that there is a base level of interest that would be paid on a risk free loan, and government bonds are often adopted as the risk free basic interest rate. The inflation premium theory suggests that lenders will only lend if the risk free rate exceeds inflation, otherwise their net principle would diminish over time. The liquidity preference theory suggests that lenders expect an additional margin when the loan is made over a longer fixed term. The expectation theory simply asserts that lenders expect some reward for lending or they will not be motivated to lend at all, and for that matter, that borrowers expect to pay. At its heart expectation theory is merely a psychological theory, or more accurately, a psychological description. The expectations theory posits a component of interest that is risk free, in excess of inflation and independent of any loadings for term.

For example, on 1 January 2007 before the Global Financial Crisis took hold, interest rate for standard variable rate home mortgages were 8.6 percent, the





yield on short term Australian government bonds was about 6.2 percent and inflation was about 2.6 percent. The gap between home mortgage rates and government bonds of about 2.4 percent was due to the riskiness of lending to home buyers compared to the government. By subtracting inflation, the return on government bonds is reduced to about 3.6 percent which is known as the real rate of return. This means that 3.6 percent of the loan interest on government bonds, home mortgages and all other lending is purely the result of the expectation of the lender for a return in excess of the principle. That looks suspiciously like usury.

One of the common validations of usury is the claim that as a result of the widespread development of capitalism, money became productive. This claim deserves careful consideration because it has been held by a number of prominent Catholic thinkers. It must be remembered that St. Thomas, and later Pope Benedict XIV both approved of investment in business enterprises as a licit way to earn a return on one's money. This means that if a person were to loan money at the expense of such an investment, the lender would have a licit extrinsic title claim to a comparable return via *lucrum cessans*. If such investments are commonly available, then money could be considered to be normally productive in these alternate applications. On this basis, usury disappears from most common loans, except for cases of extraordinary interest rates.

However, Pope Benedict XIV also pointed out that even these licit business investments could take on the character of usurious investments if their returns were excessive. The nature of returns from equity investment is complex and depends in no small measure on that other Medieval economic institution, the just price. It is not necessary to delve too far into that issue, as modern finance theory provides a ready answer

in the form of the Capital Asset Pricing Model (CAPM). The CAPM model links all debt and equity financial investments together on the basis of risk and return. It is an extension of the risk premium theory of interest.

The reality is that all capital assets, including company shares, land and even larger machinery, are priced by dividing their annual return (income plus price growth) by their anticipated rate of return. For example, if an asset is expected to have a rate of return 16 percent pa and it produces an annual return of \$32, then the price that should be paid for it will be \$32 divided by 16 percent, or \$200. This is the standard method of valuing financial assets and is known as the capitalisation method of valuation<sup>3</sup>.

The Capital Asset Pricing Model suggests that the anticipated rate of return is constructed by adding a risk margin to the risk free rate. 16 percent can be considered as a risk margin of 9.8 percent above the risk free rate of 6.2 percent. This means that all financial assets are priced and earn returns based on the risk free rate. We have seen that the risk free rate contains a usury component, therefore the capitalist world is thoroughly permeated by usury, just as Pope Leo XIII claimed a century ago. If our example were priced in January 2007 it would include 3.6 percent of usury even though it may have apparently little in common with a money loan.

A little reflection shows that this effectively exposes the usurious component that Pope Benedict XIV suspected, but in his time was not able to detect because financial theory and analysis was not sufficiently advanced and the practices not sufficiently matured. This is not the case today, though it is not the direction of the dominant debate in Catholic intellectual circles.

At first sight, recognising the extent of usury in our Western culture can be overwhelming, but it need not be so. In most cases it is done quite innocently, and it will be some time before the general sketch presented here will be developed sufficiently to form useful moral direction. More positively, we can return to Keynes and Panico, the theorists who recognised explicitly that the rate of interest was a social convention. If the rate of interest is fundamentally a psychological or social construct (an arbitrary positive artefact of a particular culture and time) then it should be able to be changed as the result of social, political or even psychological action. The interest rate cuts resulting from the Global Financial Crisis make sense when



viewed in this light—especially if inflation prospects in a depression are expected to be nil at best. More permanent measures are needed however to dampen the likelihood of future financial corruptions. These have been achieved effectively in the past and are advocated by some responsible political groups.

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## RECENT REJECTIONS OF USURY

The Australian Government originally created the Commonwealth Bank with exactly that object, though not stated in terms of controlling immoral usury. It was to provide low interest credit for Australian productive investment. It provided loans at 1% per annum interest, a rate that could be considered justified on the basis of administration costs, a reasonable extrinsic title. In doing so it provided a floor to rates of return that impacted on most of the economy, both directly and as a result of its effects on capital asset pricing. The only losers were the private banks. They eventually applied pressure that first hobbled the Commonwealth Bank's ability to provide this type of funding and more recently transformed it into one of their own kind, removing its threat. There have been other specialist development banks created with the same object as the Commonwealth Bank, but usually with more specialized target industry sectors, such as primary resources. They have also been effectively removed from the financial landscape over time. Jack Lang's thwarted attempt to bring NSW out of the Great Depression by a moratorium on foreign interest payments was another instance of Australian government action that implicitly recognised the harm caused by usury and the benefits of policy that controlled it.

More recently, the late B. A. Santamaria advocated the establishment of new development banks to operate on the same lines as the original Commonwealth Bank. His organisation, the National Civic Council (NCC), has continued to advocate that strategy as part of a plan to strengthen Australia's economy. In no place in Santamaria's writing, or the publications of the NCC, is the problem of usury mentioned, yet their strategy for the financial health of Australia hinges on a proven policy that just happens to take usury out of the entire economy. They are not the only public groups who recognise this potential.

Their evaluation of the effects of high interest rates on a country is similar to those predicted in the Old

Testament — borrowers are weakened and enslaved by loans at usury and all the other investments containing usury components that comprise the contemporary financial landscape.

Unfortunately, such visionary economics is not embraced today by any of the major political parties, or mainstream economics<sup>4</sup>. These tend to be governed by the various implications of materialism and a vision of the person that is sub-human. The acting person must be free to make moral decisions. Knowledge of the moral implications of those decisions is part of that freedom. Wealth is a good and it contains the power to do great good. The three economic institutions of the pre-modern world each provided guidance on how to realise that good. The good property owner recognised that property ownership involved obligations to the community. The good merchant or guildsman recognised obligations to neither charge customers too much nor pay employees too little. The good money owner recognised the immorality of lending into a relationship that returned an income without risk, cost, or labour. Christians and others of good will deserve access to these moral insights, but unfortunately they have been written out of Western consciousness over the last half millennia, despite the official Church's continual defense of them.

At this point in history, standing as we do at the close of the modern era, and armed with the evidence and experience of the last five centuries, it is a most opportune time to re-open investigation into the splendour of the Church's social teaching regarding the fundamental principles for economic relationships. In *Caritas in Veritate* Pope Benedict XVI has wisely reiterated that "the Church does not have technical solutions to offer" (CV n. 9), only criteria that a moral economic system must meet. This should be taken as a pointed criticism of anyone who would champion any particular "ism" as the answer to the economic problem, especially as the two dominant economic "isms" fall well short of those moral criteria. His focus on the importance on love and solidarity would suggest that if it is indeed true that the borrower becomes the slave of the lender, then any economic system that permits enslavement is to be discouraged. In this he is resonating not only with the entire set of social encyclicals, but also with St. Thomas and the dominant thread of Catholic thought through the ages.



If usury is indeed an intrinsic abuse of money, then it could hardly be better proven than by being naively targeted as a major economic problem by a world that currently does not think it exists. The call for development banks is just such a recognition, amongst many others. It also confirms Pope Leo XIII's observations regarding the pervasiveness of usury, a condition that has deteriorated in the century since he first noted it.

Yet the same century has seen usury disappear as a topic for debate. To be fair, the period was dominated by the more pressing battle between Marxist socialism and Anglo/American liberal capitalism. Within that dichotomy the Church has clearly rejected Marx, leaving the other to influence Christian minds, perhaps far too much. Liberal capitalism has no place for self-restraint, and is built on an openness to usury. It is little surprise that few Catholics today understand the dimensions of the problem.

The challenge for our time is to develop an economic science suitable for the acting person, built on the reality of creation and the dignity of the person. Such an economics would offer moral actors opportunities to freely choose to realise the common good. Like Mary freely surrendering herself to the Will of God, a truly human economic system could only be composed of free persons, aware of the impacts of their acts and inclined to freely serve God through their neighbour. Such an economic system would see the rapacious usury of today dissolve into little more than an ugly aberration of history, little different to black slavery, or the prison colonies of Enlightenment England.

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## NOTES

1 "You shall not lend upon interest to your brother, interest on money, interest on victuals, interest on anything that is lent for interest. To a foreigner you may lend upon interest, but to your brother you shall not lend upon interest; that the LORD your God may bless you in all that you undertake in the land which you are entering to take possession of it." (Deut 23:19-20). See also (Ps. 14:14-5; Prov. 28:8; Jer. 15:10; Ez 18:8; Ez 18:13; Ez 22:12; Neh 5:9-11) amongst others.

2 The Scholastics recognised one intrinsic title to interest known as *ad pompen*. This related to a loan that was not spent but merely used as a display of money to impress third parties. It was a rare use of money but one that warranted a fee.

3 In some cases, rather than dividing by a rate of return, the annual return is multiplied by its reciprocal, often referred to as the payback period or 'years purchase' figure, but the result is the same.

4 The best articulated systematic economic arguments against usury tend to be found in contemporary Islamic scholarly literature. There have been a number of Moslems educated in Western economic theory who have applied it to their culture's religious rejection of usury. They have shown the superior effectiveness of financing systems that avoid usury as well as related important topics, such as fiat money. Despite the rigour of their methods, their conclusions tend to be marginalized from Western economic debate as culturally parochial. See for example Nomani, F. and A. Rahnema (1994). *Islamic Economic Systems*. London, Zed.



# Pope Benedict XVI and the Failure of "Oinkonomics"

## Part II

by Rupert J. Ederer

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### FRATERNITY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY

The third chapter opens with a reminder of original sin along with an interesting new expression added to the Catholic Church's social teachings; and the two are not unrelated. It rearranges the premise for dealing with the *social question* by recalling that the human being is, after all, not "the sole author of himself, his life and society," which leads to him being "selfishly closed in on himself." That, Pope Benedict XVI reminds us, goes with "a purely consumerist and utilitarian view of life" which leads to the kind of crisis we once again find ourselves in (34). Here he introduces a new term which nevertheless echoes an important concept that has been present throughout the social teachings of the Church since *Rerum Novarum*. Pope John Paul II indicated in *Centesimus Annus* (10):

In this way what we nowadays call the principle of solidarity, the validity of which both in the national order of each nation and in the international order I have discussed in the Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (38-40), is clearly seen to be one of the fundamental principles of the Christian view of social and political organization. This principle is frequently stated by Pope Leo XIII, who uses the term "friendship," a concept already found in Greek philosophy. Pius XI refers to it with the equally meaningful term "social charity". Pope Paul VI, expanding the concept to cover the many modern aspects of the social question, speaks of a "civilization of love."

And now, Pope Benedict XVI appears to be expand-

ing the concept once again to cover more recent "aspects of the social question." The term *gratuitousness* (34) perhaps seems more awkward in English than in other languages, as for example *gratuita*, in the Italian edition of this encyclical. Since *social charity* was linked with *social justice* by Pius XI in *Quadragesimo Anno* (88), and since the same Pontiff stated in *Divini Redemptoris* (51) that "it is of the very essence of social justice to demand from each individual all that is necessary for the common good," it appears as though *gratuitousness* calls for *giving* over and above what is required by *justice*. It is "the astonishing experience of gift" which Pope Benedict XVI tells us "the human being is made for..." And that is notwithstanding a widespread denial of that fact in modern economic life, "because of a purely consumerist and utilitarian way of life" (34).

That brings us back to the *principle of solidarity*. As one of the two social virtues, social justice and social charity, which Pius XI told us were required for rehabilitating the social order, social charity, unlike social justice, requires *a gift*. Justice, strictly speaking, and that includes *social justice*, does not involve *gift* or *giving*, but seeing to it that each and all render to society at its various levels "all that is necessary for the common good" (DR. 51). The Jesuit Heinrich Pesch in outlining his solidaristic system established "the social virtues, justice and charity" as "the basic ethical principles for the objective regulation of social life," which... "represent sacred obligations binding consciences of citizens and kings, of those subject to authority as well as those who are heads of state!" That appeared in the first edition of his *Lehrbuch*, published





in 1909, where he could still refer to the “expression *social justice*” as “relatively new.”

The one specific example of *social justice* which Pius XI presented in *Quadragesimo Anno* had to do with the just wage. And he was not referring to the payment of that wage by each employer to each worker, which is strictly speaking a matter of *commutative justice*, i.e., giving to each worker what is his due. The Pope was referring to the much broader problem of where the social order was so out-of-order that many, if not most individual employers could not possibly pay the just wage as called for in *Quadragesimo Anno* and previously in *Rerum Novarum*, while still remaining solvent. Referring to such a situation, Pius XI wrote: “If in the present state of society this is not always feasible, social justice demands that reforms be introduced without delay which will guarantee every workman just such a wage” (Q.A. 71). That is because justice in wage payment affects the overall common good inasmuch as it involves the preponderant majority of citizens in every age and culture who must work for a living. Pope John Paul II highlighted that very important point in *Laborem Exercens*. How else can one interpret these crucial and largely overlooked words by the Polish Pope? “It should also be noted that the justice of a socioeconomic system and, in each

case, its just functioning, deserve in the final analysis to be evaluated by the way in which man’s work is properly remunerated in the system” (LE 89). The Pius XI *mandatum* involves all who can play a role in bringing about the general prevalence of the just wage: the workers themselves along with their labor unions, the employers themselves and in their associations, and political leaders who may ultimately be in a position to put in place the conditions which assure that this minimum basic just wage is paid to all full-time adult workers. In all probability that will eventually involve also generosity, or *giving*, i.e., *gratuitousness* on the part of all parties involved.

Now a willingness to give, i.e. gratuitousness, where the common good is at stake is in fact evident elsewhere in society. It simply has not made it into the critical sector of economic life where the welfare of working class families is at stake and with them the common good of all of society. For example, in small towns throughout the United States and elsewhere there are fire departments staffed by volunteers who time and again, at great inconvenience and sometimes even grave personal risk, give of their time and effort to assure that their communities may have necessary protection in various kinds of emergencies. While assistance to individual persons and households in particular calamities still constitute acts of individual charity, the willingness of volunteers to stand by and

**The one specific example of *social justice* which Pius XI presented in *Quadragesimo Anno* had to do with the just wage.**

be ready day and night to help one and all provides a general sense of security for the community overall which can only be defined as social charity or *gratuitousness*. Involved are actions directed toward the safety and well-being of all, i.e., the common good. In the economic area, the willingness of the CEO of a large business organization to limit his own salary below the exorbitant amounts that have become commonplace, thus allowing hundreds or even thousands of his rank-and-file employees to earn a more equitable and just wage, would be a good example of *gra-*





Konrad Adenauer

*gratuitousness* on his part. Such action would certainly serve the common good of the particular business and of the economy overall, thus substantiating what Pope Benedict is proposing here.

The attempt to exclude such *gratuitousness* has long been at work in economic life. There we find the “conviction that the economy must be autonomous, that it must be shielded from influences of a moral character that has led man to abuse the economic process in a thoroughly destructive way”(34). Other elements of the free market cult stand in the way, like free competition, legitimate self-interest, etc. which smacks of the old *laissez faire* cult, and of Adam Smith’s “invisible hand’ along with his disdain for those who, in his words, “affected to trade for the public good.” In the Pope’s words: “In the list of areas where the pernicious effects of sin are evident, the economy has been included for some time now.” In fact, “We have clear proof of this at the present time.” He concludes with a reminder that “the logic of gift does not exclude justice, nor does it merely sit alongside it as a second element added from without.” At the close of this important paragraph (34), its author reaches the point where he can speak of “the principle of gratuitousness.” In fact, he appears to be continuing a shift in emphasis from social justice, toward what Pius XI long ago introduced as its twin principle for social order — social charity. That is a transition which Pope Paul VI cer-

tainly prepared the way for, and which John Paul II articulated at a very high level — as *the principle of solidarity* (SRS, V). Now Benedict XVI appears to be reaffirming it as “the principle of gratuitousness” stated as such in italicized form later in this chapter (36). And it is at this point where he turns his attention to the *market* and what is required for it to function as it should to fulfill its legitimate purpose.

The concept *market* as such is basically neutral — it being an arrangement for buyers and sellers to meet in order to transact sales and purchases. A market economy therefore has come to be understood as one where exchanges by and large take place in accordance with *demand* expressed according to the needs and utility estimates of buyers, and with *supply* manifesting the scarcity and costs experienced by sellers who endeavor to accommodate them. Under the best of circumstances, exchange takes place in accordance with *commutative justice* so that each gets what is his due: the buyer his merchandise, and the seller his just price. The appropriate governing principle was termed by medieval theologians the *principle of equivalence*, or equal value for equal value. As it has developed over time in today’s complex and interdependent society, the parties on either side of the exchange process often evolved into unequal contenders. Thus one may have the advantage over the other by virtue of unequal knowledge of the market condition or unequal power (e.g. monopoly, combination) in the transaction, so that it is completed on the basis of power rather than justice. Principles other than *equivalence* have come to prevail, such as: “Let the buyer beware,” and the even more nefarious approach: “Every man for himself, and let the devil take the hindmost!” So now Pope Benedict can state with assurance: “*Without internal forms of solidarity and mutual trust, the market cannot completely fulfill its proper economic function*” (his italics). He does not cite this as a possibility, but rather as a fact. Thus: “And today it is this trust which has ceased to exist, and the loss of trust is a grave loss” (35).

That condition is not new to the 21<sup>st</sup> century! Among other thing, it helps to explain why in post-World War II Germany emerging from 13 years of National Socialism, Konrad Adenauer, a model Catholic Christian statesman who became the war-devastated country’s first chancellor, worked to establish, not a free market economy, but a *social market*



economy! Among other things it incorporated important social teachings of the Catholic Church which have a long history of development in the German-speaking lands. Down-sized Germany's remarkable recovery from the ruins of World War II following 13 years of Nazi rule – its *Wirtschaftswunder* — became legendary.

Meanwhile, resurrecting alongside the *social market economy*, on “a mountain in Switzerland,” as the Austrian-born economist Joseph Schumpeter remarked, not without some sarcasm, was the neo-liberal revival led by so-called “Austrian economists” notably Friedrich von Hayek and Ludwig von Mises. They won supporters in other lands, including Milton Friedman in the United States, who captivated the minds of political leaders of both major parties: like Ronald Reagan and George Bush – both senior and junior, as well as Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton. Together, such non-Christian economists master-minded the restoration of the “free market economy.” That involved deregulation in certain sectors of the economy including the banking system, the abolition of protective tariffs in the interests of globalism, and tax reductions especially generous for the upper income groups.

**“Without internal forms of solidarity and mutual trust, the market cannot completely fulfill its proper economic function.”**

The earnest effort to restore the *laissez faire* conditions which led up to the economic collapse leading into the *Great Depression* in the 1930's got underway; and it brought the world to the brink once again in 2008.

Pope Benedict now points out that the social teaching of the Catholic Church includes, but moves beyond the “principles of so-called commutative justice” to which the market certainly remains subject. “But the social doctrine of the Church has unceasingly highlighted the importance of distributive justice and social justice for the market economy, not only because it belongs within a broader social and political context, but also because of the wider network of rela-

tions within which it operates.” What is more: “...if the market is governed solely by the principle of equivalence in the value of exchanged goods, it cannot produce the social cohesion that it requires in order to function well.” That by itself implies more than simply a *free* market, but, for want of a better name, a *social* market. Why? Because “*Without internal forms of solidarity and mutual trust, the market cannot completely fulfill its proper economic function*” (italics in text). The Pope was beyond a purely academic observation here, stating, “And today it is this trust which has ceased to exist, and the loss of trust is a grave loss” (35).

By Pope Benedict's assertion that “economic activity....needs to be directed towards the pursuit of the common good for which the political community in particular must also take responsibility,” (36) he made no converts among persistent free marketeers who want government to be absent. Indeed, oftentimes Catholic neoliberals who pretend to have some awareness of their Church's social teachings will appeal shamelessly to the *principle of subsidiarity*, as if that hallowed principle provided a clear track for all government to vanish so that the strong can continue to oppress and cheat the weak! That ploy was in fact unmasked by Pope Benedict's statement about “...when economic action conceived merely as an engine for wealth creation is detached from political action, conceived as a means for pursuing justice through redistribution.” And that was followed by the provocative reminder

intended for Darwinist free marketeers: “The Church has always held that economic action is not to be regarded as something opposed to society in and of itself.” He added: “The market is not and must not become the place where the strong subdue the weak.” By a forceful statement, the *market* as such is exonerated in that it may “become a negative force not because it is so by nature, but because a certain ideology can make it so.” That “ideology” is the false concept of freedom as applied to the market and to economic activity overall to which Pope Benedict is applying instead certain truths so as to make it a true freedom which liberates; and that, we need to recall here, is the



purpose of this encyclical. "Economy and finance" are neutral tools, but they can cause mayhem as they are doing now once again, "when those at the helm are motivated by purely selfish ends." (36).

It is necessary to recall at this point that in our time the term, *market economy*, itself has acquired significant ideological baggage so as to make it often identical with the familiar notion, *free market economy*. The latter is proposed by its most extreme adherents as the *absolute good* in opposition to the *absolute evil*, socialism. Actually, through most of human history, there was no totally *free* market economy. That would represent economic anarchy. The notion has become a kind of ideological bauble since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century when the goddess Liberty became an object of worship among *avant-garde* Europeans. During the Middle Ages there were significant controls imposed on markets by craft and merchant guilds, as well as by local governments or ruling aristocrats. Also the concept of the *just price* and the ban against usury, carefully developed by theologians, was not dismissed lightly. During the Mercantilist era after the close of the medieval era, monarchs interfered often on a massive scale, throughout the market processes including pricing, as they attempted to assure an influx of gold and silver by positive trade balances. In more recent times there have been various degrees of state intervention in the market for goods and services, as well as for the factors of production. These eventually ranged from the near total command economy in the erstwhile Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, to instances of less but still substantial state control over economic life as, for example in National Socialist (Nazi) Germany and Fascist Italy, or even as in Great Britain directly after World War II. Closer to home there are still woeful lamentations at large about all of the "socialist" measures enacted during the New Deal era in the United States during the Great Depression; and much energy has been expended in the years following it to rid our country of such "over-regulation" of our economy. Until now, I am not aware of any public outcry during the present economic catastrophe about the bank deposit insurance system (FDIC) which was installed early during the New Deal period. It was designed to prevent large-scale bank failures like the ones which brought the economy to its knees after the stock market crash in 1929. Also, few would deny that during the deadliest of all wars which followed the Depres-

sion (and finally put a definitive end to it!), it was necessary in the United States to set aside the so-called free market throughout substantial sectors of the economy. This involved allocation and rationing of materials and commodities in short supply, along with wage and price controls generally, in addition to excess profit taxes and taxes on incomes which ran as high as 90% at the top brackets. Attempts to circumvent price controls were labeled with the pejorative term, "black marketeering," and subject to severe penalties.

Such situations bring the overall *common good* into sharp relief where it is obvious and can be recognized for its overriding presence and importance in economic life. But in fact the common good is always important and present, politically and economically, as Pope Benedict is reaffirming in this encyclical, and as his predecessors have been affirming since 1891! He indicates here: "The economic sphere is neither ethically neutral, nor inherently inhuman and opposed to society" (36). And that brings us to the kinds of problems we face once again at present, because: "Without internal forms of solidarity and mutual trust, the market economy cannot completely fulfill its proper economic function" (35).

There was one other new term presented in this chapter of *Caritas in Veritate* that is not found in previous social encyclicals; and it is worth noting. It is the concept of *stakeholder*, as juxtaposed to the stockholder. Pope Benedict introduces it in the context of his bold observation that, with "today's international economic scene... marked by grave deviations and failures... a profoundly new way of understanding business enterprise is called for." With "(o)ld models.... disappearing.... promising new ones are taking shape on the horizon" (40). "Stakeholders" include "the workers, the suppliers, the consumers, the natural environment, and broader society..." In a word, the Pope is speaking of the broader *common good* that extends beyond the *particular* good of the stockholders or owners or even of the enterprise as a whole. Thus, the central theme of this and previous social encyclicals comes to the fore again. It is: the *common good* and everyone's obligations to it in social justice and social charity (solidarity). This stands in contrast to what the Pope characterizes as "a new cosmopolitan class of managers... answerable only to the shareholders," and such practices as "a speculative use of financial resources which yields to the temptation of seeking only



short-term profit without regard for the long term sustainability of the enterprise....”(40). That sounds all too familiar amid the wreckage of economies worldwide in 2008 on a high tide of *sub-prime mortgages* and arcane speculative devices like *hedge funds* and *derivatives*. One indication of the tenuous condition and vulnerability of the present economy where such things still abound is the undue preoccupation with indices like the Dow-Jones, Standard and Poor, etc. These reflect mainly the guesses and hopes of speculators who invest in securities and commodities, and who have far less interest in the real economy and “the public good” (which Adam Smith referred to with disdain), than in their own immediate prospects for gain. For them the economy is a vast casino where people play more than they *work*. The welfare of the people who work for a living and who are the real heart and soul of any economy, providing the goods and services needed by all, is abandoned to a scramble for the crumbs off the gaming table.

The chapter ends with a papal statement citing Pope John Paul II, to the effect that globalization as such is “neither good or bad,” depending on “what people make of it.”(42). And it was Pope Paul VI who already opposed the benighted notion held by some that “poor people should remain at a fixed state of development.” What is needed instead to avoid “great dangers and difficulties” is an “ethical spirit” that drives globalization “towards the humanizing goal of solidarity.”

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## THE DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLES; RIGHTS AND DUTIES; THE ENVIRONMENT

The fourth chapter of *Caritas in Veritate* is about solidarity, ethics in economic life, population, and environmental concern. As the third chapter ends with an affirmation of *solidarity*, so *Chapter Four* opens with a quotation from the Pope Paul VI encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (17) stating: “The reality of human solidarity, which is a benefit for us, also imposes an obligation”(43). Thus it becomes apparent that the concept *solidarity*, which Heinrich Pesch established as the governing principle for an economic system opposed to both liberal capitalism and collectivist socialism, is intended to play a major role in this encyclical. The Jesuit economist identified it in the first volume of his *Lehrbuch* as “... first of all social interdepen-

dence, the actual mutual dependence of people on one another,” indicating that: “This mutual dependence on the well-being of other persons in society is therefore no mere *de facto* relationship.” Instead: “Inasmuch as the reciprocity and the community of interests has its foundation in man’s rational nature, solidarity also represents a moral relationship between man and his fellow man.”

Another significant concordance between the German Pope and the German Jesuit’s thinking comes to the foreground here. The first chapter in the first volume of the *Lehrbuch* is entitled *Natur und Mensch* (*Nature and Man*). The first section of that chapter establishes the proper hierarchy between the two by its heading: “*Man as Lord of the World According to God’s Ordinance.*” It does so on the basis of “the will of God, who assigned it to the father of the human race by virtue of the fact that He bestowed a rational nature on man, elevating him to a status higher than that enjoyed by the world of matter and plants and animals.” That makes Pesch’s *Lehrbuch* the only economics text which begins on the basis of Sacred Scripture (Genesis 1:26, also 2:15), as well as in accordance with common sense.

Since common sense is not always *common*, Pope Benedict XVI uses this chapter to defuse the at times exaggerated ecological concern which in our time has followed an era when the “environment” was not of significant concern at all, so that it became the object of what was often wanton depredation. He uses terms like “neo-paganism” and “a new pantheism” (48) to describe the pendulum swing to an opposite extreme where nature represents an “untouchable taboo”(48). The Pope warns that “human salvation cannot come from nature alone.”

Now there can be no doubt that in our own time there is still much violation of nature and waste of its resources. The capitalist spirit which has prevailed in recent centuries, where profit at all costs and without limit is the dominant obsession, played a large role in that. It is often based on attitudes which reduce “nature merely to a collection of contingent data,” and it ends up “doing violence to the environment and even encouraging activity that fails to respect human nature itself”(48). Regrettably, and perhaps predictably, the environment and problems associated with it have also provided another opening for the population controllers. In the face of facts like the so-called *Green Revolu-*



tion which among other things enabled some of the “overpopulated” and “starving” nations to become food exporters, along with the failure of their prophecies about imminent massive worldwide famine, some population alarmists have shifted their emphasis to environmental concerns about imminent shortages of finite resources, and to overpopulation as a cause of underdevelopment. In this chapter, Pope Benedict devoted attention to such matters.

Once again the facts refute the theory, as Pope Benedict points out. “Populous nations have been able to emerge from poverty thanks not least to the size of their population and the talents of their people” (44). This was true in the past in nations with the highest population densities like Great Britain, the Netherlands, Japan, Germany and, in more recent times, India. Its converse is true now when, “formerly prosperous nations are presently passing through a phase of uncertainty and in some cases decline precisely because of their falling birth rates.” As the Pope points out, “.. this has become a crucial problem for highly affluent societies...” (44). That is due in part to what he cites as a “decline in births, falling at times beneath the so-called ‘replacement level,’” which puts a “strain on the social welfare systems, increases their costs and eats into savings and hence the financial resources needed for investment, reduces the availability of qualified labourers, and narrows the ‘brain pool’ upon which nations can draw for their needs.” Once again, the importance of *solidarity* comes into the picture, since, ... “smaller and at times miniscule families run the risk of impoverishing social relations and failing to ensure effective forms of solidarity.”

Some may judge that the Pope is stepping beyond the proper bounds of the *principle of subsidiarity* by insisting (as the Second Vatican Council did back in 1965), that: “...States are called to enact policies promoting the centrality and integrity of the family founded on marriage between a man and a woman, the primary vital cell of society...” But we need to recall that we live at a time when the state has long since moved toward an opposite position ranging all of the way from condoning homosexual “marriages” (e.g. in the United

States), to severe punishment of couples for having more than one child (China).

Pope Benedict is supported here not only by the concern expressed by leaders in various nations where declining population growth rates have led toward economic stagnation so as to jeopardize future economic growth and national vitality, as in Russia and Japan. There is also the opinion of competent economists far apart in time and orientation. Heinrich Pesch, while outlining an economic system based on the *principle of solidarity* during the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, also proposed a principle for population policy stating: “Where care has been taken to safeguard the quality of a nation’s people, generally there will be no need for concern about their quantity.” In his support, he cited other distinguished German economists of his time including Adolf Wagner (1835-1917) and Wilhelm Roscher (1817-1894). The latter wrote: “A relatively large and dense population...is of itself a productive force. A more numerous and dense population has at its disposal more brains as well as more arms which provide for more capacity in the national work force, and which because of the possibility of more division of labor and combination of labor also makes for more efficiency in the work force.”

**“Only in a nation where people, by and large, have a highly developed sense of moral responsibility. . . only there will the national welfare have a firm and, in fact, the best guarantee.”**

Among more recent economic analysts who addressed this topic was the British-born economist Colin Clark who served on the group which advised Pope Paul VI in the preparation of his encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (1968). Clark, was noted for his work on food supply and population. Using appropriate up-to-date statistical techniques and data, he arrived at the conclusion: “But we do have historical evidence of a number of cases of the beneficial effect of substantial population growth in communities with a limited area





of agricultural land.” He supported the thesis that population density, rather than hampering national growth and prosperity, can serve as a stimulus to greater national productivity. His analysis ranged from ancient Greece to present-day Japan and India.

Influenced by, among others, those who spread panic about inevitable worldwide famine due to a “population explosion,” there is now an equivalent tendency to attribute underdevelopment as well as environmental depredation to *overpopulation*. Therefore Pope Benedict XVI felt the need to state: “To consider population increase as the primary cause of underdevelopment is mistaken, even from an economic point of view.” While he upheld concern about “responsible procreation,” he negated the kind of sex education “aimed solely at protecting the interested parties from possible disease or the ‘risk’ of procreation”(44). In a world that is being reduced to absurdity in such matters, the Pope reminded one and all that: “States are called to enact policies promoting the centrality and the integrity of the family founded on marriage between a man and a woman, the primary vital cell of society”(ibid.)

In a world that seems predestined for what is preposterous, there was a papal warning also about ecological extremism indicating that “human salvation cannot come from nature alone”(48). Traditional economic textbooks taught students that there are three primary factors of production: land, labor, and capital – the first two being *original* and the third, *derived* from the other two. Heinrich Pesch altered that somewhat to, *man, nature and capital* — a difference reflecting his intensive philosophical training which called for sharp definition. Water and wind, to cite just two such important natural productive elements present throughout history, may be subsumed under the term, *land*, in a casual discussion; but that is not appropriate for a scientific consideration of the three traditional primary factors of production in economics.

Pesch, given his solid philosophical foundation, also had much to say about the other topic which Pope Benedict XVI included in this chapter: *ethics* and its relationship to the economic science and economic life. In a short work published in 1918, as well as in various relevant sections of his *Lehrbuch*, the Jesuit economist retrieved economics from the drab positivistic mode into which it had drifted. Here the Pope states in a straight-forward manner that, “The economy needs ethics in order to function correctly;” but he presents that with the qualification: “not any ethics whatsoever, but an ethics that is people-centered”(45). Being the head of the largest and oldest Christian Church, the pope specifies the “underlying system of morality” of “the Church’s social doctrine..... since it is based on man’s creation in the image of God (Gen. 1:27)...which gives rise to the inviolable dignity of the human person and the transcendent value of natural moral norms.”

Pesch, also a trained economist and author of the longest economics text ever written, had this to say about the role of *ethics* in economics and in economic life:

Only in a nation where people, by and large, have a highly developed sense of moral responsibility so that they are willing to dedicate themselves conscientiously to their work and professions, and to avoid the restless pursuit of unlimited or even unjust gain, and where people regularly have concern for the good of other citizens and for the well-being of the whole of society, there and only there will the national welfare have a firm and, in fact, the best



←

guarantee. The economist has to recognize that. We ask no more of him. He does not have to become a moralist or a preacher, or to demand the good because it is good; and neither does he have to try to discover ethical principles and laws, or to develop them. They are provided for him. It is enough for him to take note of them and to observe them. But it remains of the greatest importance for cultural advancement in our time that we are reminded of how, precisely in economic matters, the material welfare of nations is essentially conditioned by the active dominion of the eternal and divine moral law. An economy which operates solely on the basis of positive law with a historically variable morality, and on the basis of moral systems which are allegedly developed by people, remains unable in the long run to safeguard the common good against libertine egotism, and the institution of private property against the onslaught of socialism.

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## THE COOPERATION OF THE HUMAN FAMILY

The human race stems from a common Divine Father, its Creator, and also from common human parents, *Adam* and *Eve*. It was therefore a family from its beginning. As it proceeded down through history, the *human family* has taken many centuries for the fuller realization of its capacity (and also its need) to actively cooperate. That process was extended and accelerated in a spectacular manner by the virtual erasure of time and distance with and following the World War II era. The Church which assumed the name *Catholic* (i.e. *worldwide*), and which since its beginning has been active throughout the known world, has now begun to speak about worldwide *solidarity*. That is implicit in the first paragraph of the fifth chapter of *Caritas in Veritate* in the important italicized statement: “*The development of peoples depends, above all, on a recognition that the human race is a single family working together in true communion, not simply a group of subjects who happen to live side-by-side.*” (53) Thus the *principle of solidarity* comes even more to the foreground in the fifth chapter of *Caritas in Veritate* with its title: *The Cooperation of the Human Family*.

Here Pope Benedict XVI, a master theologian, makes the important point that the kind of *solidarity* involved here goes beyond the social sciences. It requires “the contribution of disciplines such as metaphysics and theology.” Among recent generations of

social scientists, including economists, any such “contribution” would be taboo. Heinrich Pesch had to deal with that in his time when he was accused of “theologizing” economics. As for metaphysics, he did not hesitate to quote extensively from a work by his older brother, Tilmann Pesch, S. J., a noted and published philosopher. And that was precisely for arriving at his original formulation of “the principle of solidarity.”

Typically, social scientists, especially economists, rely routinely on mathematical formulations for expressing the “laws” of their sciences. Physicists, astronomers and other natural scientists need to rely on mathematical principles, and they do not regard that as demeaning to their own scientific endeavors. In fact they get and have gained in the modern era remarkable results leading to great technical accomplishments. Social scientists, on the other hand, need to rely on metaphysics, ethics, and moral theology; and they do so whether they realize it or are willing to acknowledge it or not. Their persistent tendency to rely on mathematical formulations has by and large gained little for them. Perhaps that is why their sciences have not gotten spectacular results in the same manner as the natural sciences have over the past two centuries. The reason why ethics and eventually moral theology are of great importance to economics is because it is a *practical* as distinct from a *speculative* science – terms which were common in Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy. This means that economics involves the *free* acts of human beings, not spontaneous automatic actions which man has in common with animals: like respiration, heart-beat, and digestion. Therefore moral philosophers (ethicians) and moral theologians have something to say to economists whose science deals with *human* actions for satisfying their temporal wants. Technically speaking, that can be accomplished by theft or pillage, as well as by hard work or honest purchase. Ethically speaking only the latter options are licit. The most recent economic calamity that is addressed in this encyclical appears to substantiate once again – tragically – that immoral economic actions also end up being poor *economic* actions. That is because human beings are not exclusively economic beings. Being human makes them subject to the moral law – which is precisely why Pope Benedict XVI and several of his predecessors have gotten involved in issuing social encyclicals, the latest of which is *Caritas in Veritate*.

An especially critical specific area where ethics is of special relevance to economics is one which Pope



Benedict addresses precisely in this part of *Caritas in Veritate*. It involves the *just wage*. That links him and his teaching with the great tradition of social encyclicals dating back to Leo XIII who originated the modern just wage doctrine in *Rerum Novarum*. Pius XI followed with the most detailed development of that particular doctrine which subsequent popes, including Pius XII, Blessed John XXIII, and Paul VI, have reaffirmed in various ways. It remained for the great Polish Pope John Paul II, to establish the just wage as the “key means....for verifying the justice of the whole socioeconomic system,” in his own great labor encyclical *Laborem Exercens* (89). That happens to conform with good economic common sense in normal human society. In such a society the preponderant majority of mankind relies mainly on its work for sustaining its livelihood – a condition which is to apply until the end of time according to what was foretold in Genesis (3:17-19). Accordingly, Pope Benedict now affirms “especially the right to a just wage and the personal security of the worker and his family..” at this point in his own social encyclical issued at a time of great economic crisis (63). The Pope points out that “....problems associated with development...highlight the di-

German Pope elaborates on what the just wage implies. He does so by indicating what “decent” signifies, as that was expressed by Pope John Paul II in a May 1, 2000 appeal for “a global coalition in favor of decent work.” The Polish Pope made the statement in support of an initiative by the *International Labor Organization* which is the leading world body entrusted with establishing and safeguarding fair labor standards on a worldwide basis. The role of the ILO, first founded in 1918, is especially vital in the present era involving the globalization of markets for labor and for its products. This passage is worth highlighting since it now involves the approbation of two successive pontiffs in the context of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: (63)

It means work that expresses the essential dignity of every man and woman in the context of their particular society; work that is freely chosen effectively associating workers, both men and women, with the development of their community; work that enables the worker to be respected and free from any form of discrimination; work that makes it possible for families to meet their needs and provide schooling for their children, without their children themselves being forced into labor; work that permits the workers to or-

ganize themselves freely, and to make their voices heard; work that leaves enough room for discovering one’s roots at the personal, familial, and spiritual level; work that guarantees those who have retired a decent standard of living.

All of that does not retreat one iota from specifications by earlier

**“The development of peoples depends, above all, on a recognition that the human race is a single family working together in true communion, not simply a group of subjects who happen to live side-by-side.”**

rect link between poverty and unemployment,” and that often “poverty results from a *violation of the dignity of human work* either because work opportunities are limited (through unemployment or underemployment),” or, and here he quotes directly from *Laborem Exercens* (LE 37), “because a low value is put on work and the rights that flow from it, especially the right to a just wage and the personal security of the worker and his or her family”(63).

The matter does not rest there with a simple reaffirmation of the right to a just wage. Perhaps more than in any social encyclical since *Quadragesimo Anno*, the

popes about the just wage and the various ways in which it may be complemented or enhanced. Nor does it support escapes proposed by enthusiasts at various times and in various social contexts involving retreats to a simpler past, or fanciful ventures into some dubious futuristic scheme. It accepts the basic context of contemporary society, complete with all of the dynamism and potential, along with the pitfalls, made possible by the ongoing technological revolution that has especially marked the modern era in history.

As for labor unions, some persons still somehow stand opposed to unionism in principle; and that in-



cludes not a few Catholics — notwithstanding more than a century of social teachings by the Catholic Church in support of them precisely *in principle*. Such opposition persists even after the dramatic role which the Polish labor union *Solidarnosc* played, at great personal risk to its leaders, (and probably to the Pope himself!) in bringing down the Communist government in Poland and, along with it soon afterwards, the entire socialist Soviet empire. Pope Benedict reaffirms here that labor unions “have always been encouraged and supported by the Church” (64). That happens to apply also to the personal support and encouragement which Pope John Paul II gave to *Solidarnosc* and its Nobel Peace Prize-winning leader Lech Walesa. His successor-pope now encourages unions to widen their horizons in keeping with the broadening global dimensions of the modern world economy. He asks them to consider also the concerns of consumers who in certain situations have felt the need to take issue with positions taken by the workers and their unions. He also calls for national unions to take into account in particular the problems of workers in developing countries, who have not yet attained the level of protection which they have, and to perhaps offer assistance where possible. All of that does not, because it cannot, add up to a change in the Catholic Church’s position with regard to the workers’ right to organize into unions in principle, or in the mode that they have reached at this point in time.

This encyclical was issued after certain delays. At one point Pope Benedict had indicated that the economic collapse which occurred late in 2008 prompted him to delay its release so that he could address issues related to the financial crisis which led to that collapse. This would involve walking on thin ice inasmuch as it involves an area replete with sophisticated matter that is highly technical in nature. He therefore had to confine himself to a more general approach to the problem. This did not prevent the Pope from referring to “renewed structures and operating methods that have to be designed after its misuse (finance) which wreaked such havoc on the real economy...” (65). The scolding continued: “Financiers must rediscover the genuinely ethical foundation of their activity, so as not to abuse the sophisticated instruments which can serve to betray the interests of savers.” Even the “sub-prime mortgages” which caused widespread havoc and distress often proved deceptive for ordinary citizens whose lives were upset, often seriously. The shock

waves extended well beyond, also to the countless workers who ended up losing their jobs and their livelihood. Expressions occur in the encyclical like “scandalous speculation” and “the risk of usury” — a phenomenon which the Church has encountered and addressed at least since the Middle Ages; and suggestions are made about “credit unions,” even “pawn-broking” and other ventures in “micro-credit,” along with “new ventures” for the benefit of “the weaker elements in society” (65). And there is also a reminder about cooperative purchasing “like the consumer cooperatives that have been in operation since the nineteenth century, partly through the initiative of Catholics” (66). That may be a hint that ordinary people should have avenues leading away from macro-banking where their interests are sometimes lost sight of.

The chapter concludes referring to “the unrelenting growth of global interdependence,” i.e. worldwide solidarity. In this context Pope Benedict calls for a “reform of the *United Nations Organization*,” among other “international institutions and international finance...” It is a timely proposal, since there are many critics also among American Catholics who harbor a strong ideological opposition to the UN concept that emerged following World War II. Their antagonism extends to the Church’s endorsement of the UN *in principle*, even while ironically many of them are “hawkish” with regard to American involvement in a series of disastrous wars in the Middle East — wars deemed unjust by both Pope John Paul II and the man who was then his leading theological advisor, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. That already made such persons hostile to Pope Paul VI who was the first pontiff to personally address the UN in New York, and who upheld the *concept* as such in *Populorum Progressio*, as did Blessed John XXIII before him (cf. *Pacem in Terris* 142-145). While generally unsympathetic to the Church’s social teachings, they nevertheless often take recourse in one of its leading precepts — the *principle of subsidiarity* — intimating that international bodies like the UN of their very nature represent transgressions of that principle. Pope Benedict mentioned the *principle* twice in this final paragraph of the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter, perhaps to reassure one and all that he is familiar with how international bodies like the UN *can* operate properly within its context. To some, *subsidiarity* apparently means leaving every individual to his own resources no matter how meager those may be, having been deprived of them by the rich and powerful. That



echoes the free marketeering principle: *Every man for himself, and let the Devil take the hindmost*. Accordingly the same ideologues are reflexively opposed to aid from rich nations to the poor nations of the world. One must conclude that they stand opposed to the fact and concept of worldwide *solidarity*. That is unless they expect that it too will happen along by chance in some happy equilibrium brought about by an "invisible hand," or by the kinds of "natural laws" about which Adam Smith and the Physiocrats had fantasized. These early economists were of course mistakenly equating economic "natural laws" with *physical* natural laws, not with the *moral* natural law which Pope Benedict mentions again in the next chapter. The fulfillment of that law does not take place automatically; it requires deliberate human action — an *actus humanus*!

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLES AND TECHNOLOGY

Pope Benedict XVI devotes the final chapter of his social encyclical to what is in a certain sense the overwhelming impact of advancing technology on contemporary mankind. His tenure as a distinguished university professor and scholar comes to the fore again here, and that makes for some difficult reading. This is a matter, incidentally, which occupied the attention also of the brilliant Pope Pius XII at various times during his nineteen year pontificate. For example, his 1953 Christmas Message — *Modern Technology and Peace* — scores "the one-sided influence of that 'technological spirit' which only recognizes and reckons as real what can be expressed in mathematical formulas and utilitarian calculations."

The chapter opens with an interesting parallel that illustrates one of the gentle pope's special talents — his ability to lay bare fundamental errors in human conduct in what may seem at first to be a merely parenthetical comment. Pope Benedict proposes here that, "... the development of peoples goes off course, if humanity thinks it can recreate itself through the 'wonders' of technology, just as economic development is exposed as a destructive sham if it relies on the 'wonders' of finance in order to sustain unnatural and consumerist growth." Instead, we are redirected to a recognition of "the fundamental norms of the natural moral law which God has written in our hearts" (68). That statement would serve to redirect the errant arro-

gant technocracy of our times, along with the naïve reliance on the "natural laws" of classical economics and its recurrent insistence on an unhinged concept of freedom which persists from the paleo-liberalism of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the neo-liberalism of our own time. The real question, then as now, remains: *Freedom for what end?* And that is where the theme of this encyclical applies: providing the *true* answer as an act of charity at the cosmic level! The same holds for technological progress. Technology is good, and we are not entitled to spurn it or clamor for a return to some more primitive form of society. As Pope Paul VI stated in *Populorum Progressio*: "The human spirit, increasingly free of its bondage to creatures, can be more easily drawn to the worship and contemplation of the Creator (*Pop. Progr.* 41). In fact, Pope Benedict indicates here, "Technology, in this sense, is a response to God's command to till and to keep the land" (*Gen.* 2: 15). But it may not be regarded as "self-sufficient," — as an end in itself — like "absolute freedom" (70).

We are then asked to look at the results today when: "Often the development of peoples is considered a matter of financial engineering, the freeing up of markets, the removal of tariffs, investment in production and institutional reforms — in other words, a purely technical matter." Pope Benedict warns that: "Development will never be fully guaranteed through automatic or impersonal forces whether from the market or from international politics." In other words, economics is not a *positive* or purely *speculative* science, i.e., involving simply the presentation of truths without directly implying rules for deliberate actions and choices by human subjects. It is a *practical* science involving precisely deliberate free human actions and choices by free human subjects whose actions are subject to the moral law. As indicated previously, one can charge a just price, or cheat the customer, just as one can pay a just wage or cheat the worker; and one can lend at a usurious rate or charge legitimate interest. The relevant punch-line follows in italics: "*Development is impossible without upright men and women, without financiers and politicians whose consciences are finely attuned to the common good*" (71).

The *common good* is, of course, one of the oldest and basic important concepts in Catholic social teaching, being, as it is, the *object* of both key principles for the restoration of social order — *social justice* and *social*

continued on p. 47



## "Devouring Usury"

**ASGEIR JONSSON, WHY ICELAND? HOW ONE OF THE WORLD'S SMALLEST COUNTRIES BECAME THE MELTDOWN'S BIGGEST CASUALTY (NEW YORK: MCGRAW-HILL, 2009), 230PP, \$22.95, ISBN 978-0-07-163284-3**

A devouring usury, although often condemned by the Church, but practiced nevertheless under another form by avaricious and grasping men, has increased the evil; and in addition the whole process of production as well as trade in every kind of goods has been brought almost entirely under the power of a few, so that a very few rich men have laid a yoke of almost slavery on the unnumbered masses of non-owning workers.  
Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, #6

Usury today is a dead issue, and except by a plainly equivocal use of the term, or save in the mouths of a few inveterate haters of the present order, it is not likely to stir to life.  
John T. Noonan, Jr., *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury*, p. 1.

As far as famous last words go, John Noonan's claim that usury was a "dead issue" that could from now (i.e., as of 1957) on be relegated to the Medieval Studies department ranks right up there with George Custer's claim that there were no Indians for miles around. Asgeir Jonsson's *Why Iceland?* makes its own contribution to the anthology of famous last words jokes, when Jonsson cites the claim which Moody's made after it upgraded all three investment banks in Iceland to a triple A rating. "Moody's," Jonsson tells us, "maintained that 'access to finance will always be available for Iceland—albeit at varying prices'" (p. 91).

Asgeir Jonsson's saga of Iceland's banking collapse could have been taken out of the Middle Ages in a

number of different ways. The past is always prelude to the present, even if the prelude has long since been forgotten. In that regard, the usury question is one of the longest running examples of unfinished business in the history of ideas.

Actually, this story begins in the Dark Ages, when it looked as if civilization was going to be snuffed out altogether in Europe by hordes of Germanic invaders. *Why Iceland?* is the story of a bunch of Viking looters, who felt, in Jonsson's words that "success is the reward for personal daring, ingenuity, improvisation, and an eye for the main chance—just as it was in Viking times" (p. 10). Looting has become embedded in Iceland's DNA, a place where most of the inhabitants' fathers came from

Norway and most the inhabitants mothers were carried off by said fathers from some Celtic land to the southeast. As Jonsson tells us, "about 90 percent of the country's male ancestry is Norwegian, while 60 to 70 percent of the female ancestry is Celtic in origin" (p. 6). Iceland, in other words, was an uninhabited island in the middle of the north Atlantic until Viking looters began repairing there as their hideout after raiding the coasts of Ireland, Scotland, Wales, England and Brittany for women and loot. As a result, Iceland, Jonsson continues, "has never excelled at collective, elaborate planning, discipline, or attention to detail. It has never needed a strong central command to organize for war or national defense, and because of its diminutiveness, it has never required the construction of a sophisticated bureaucracy" (p. 10).

Given the propensity to looting which the Icelandic nation inherited from its Viking forbears, it was only a matter of time before they discovered capitalism. What held the Vikings back from their ancestral propensity to looting is the same thing that held the Lombards and the English back for a time, namely, Christianity. The difference is that the Vikings were more or less totally isolated from the rest of the world and so came into contact with pernicious ideas like Thatcherism/Capitalism much later than the Germanic tribes who were in the mainstream of European culture. This would also explain why England got into the game later than Italy. Like Iceland, England was, and still is, an island.

Iceland got into the banking industry in 1989, when the cod fish-





ery collapsed from overfishing and Thatcherism was at the apogee of its influence in the world. It was around this time that David Oddsson, who became mayor of Reykjavik in 1982 and then a member of the Althing, the Icelandic Parliament, pushed through a series of free market reforms that made Iceland the most capitalist country in Scandinavia. After embracing "Thatcherian free-market liberalism," and providing "the political muscle needed to effect privatization, tax cuts, and a free market," Oddsson began to portray himself, beginning in 1995, as the guardian of Icelandic prosperity. When he finally stepped down from the Prime Minister's chair in 2004, he had served as Europe's longest-standing politico. In America, it would have been as if Ronald Reagan had retired in the year 2000.

Oddsson's legacy was "the most pro-free-market economy in Scandinavia" and a country which was now "open to the outside world after a half century of isola-

move—which since it did not entail full membership—did not force Iceland to open up its territorial waters to European trawlers. It was the best of both worlds, or the worst, depending on your point of view. As some indication that it was the worst of both worlds, Jonsson tells us that "Most Icelanders worked about 50 hours a week," which meant that "this was a European country with an American labor market."

For a while, the Icelanders found ways to complement what was going on in Europe. Since Iceland had a small, young, and enterprising population, they found a natural symbiosis with Germany, which was old, and cautious, and going into retirement faster than they were being replaced by young German workers. As a result, German pension fund managers in search of high returns were avid to lend the Icelanders money. As a result, Germany became "the primary source of funding for the early expansion

***Why Iceland? is the story of a bunch of Viking looters, who felt, in Jonsson's words that "success is the reward for personal daring, ingenuity, improvisation, and an eye for the main chance—just as it was in Viking times"***

tion." In 1994 Iceland joined the European Economic Area, a move which gave Iceland "access to the European common market and the free flow of goods, services, capital and labor." At the same time, this

of Iceland's banking system" (p. 40), and, as a result of that, by 1990 "Iceland had the greatest proportion of bank employees to the total workforce of any Scandinavian country, a circumstance com-



parable to that of Switzerland" (p. 27).

Before long, Sigurdur Einarsson, CEO of Kaupthing, the Icelandic bank that epitomized the emergence of the Vikings as financial players in the New World Order, could crow: "We're becoming the Goldman Sachs of Iceland." It would have been more accurate if he had said that they were becoming the Bear Stearns of Iceland or the Lehman Brothers of Iceland, because the hard lesson that the Vikings were about to learn in the expensive school of experience is that Iceland was most definitely not too big to fail. People like Einarsson would eventually preside over the creation of a financial monster with assets about ten times the size of Iceland's GNP, but the whole experiment collapsed like a house of cards when Iceland was perceived as a threat to the world's real financial players, a group which included the hedge funds and the central banks that were ready to bail them out if they ran into trouble.

In 2005 the Icelandic government, taking its cue from the Viking looters who were their forbears, decided to get into international finance in a big way when they "appointed a committee to draft policy proposals with the objective of turning Iceland into a new international finance center." Both Jonsson and David Oddson, who was by this time the head of the Central Bank of Iceland, faulted Vikings like Einarsson for their hubris and recklessness without seeing that recklessness and looting are the two characteristics which made Einarsson a successful capitalist. What Jonsson should

have said is that Einarsson got it half right. He created an American-style capitalist casino but without creating the Icelandic version of the Fed, which is to say, someone to bail him out and save him from the consequences of his own reckless behavior.

Jonsson, who was the head of research and chief economist at Kaupthing before it went bust, tries to be as positive as possible about what everyone should have seen as the financial equivalent of an accident waiting to happen. Iceland's financial sector was a bubble destined to burst:

Once it was liberalized, the financial sector broke out of the political cage, and the older generation of bankers was brushed aside abruptly by a hungry new free market oriented and internationalist

The financial Vikings of Iceland created a system that needed a lender of last resort, which is to say, a government to bail it out, but this is precisely what the Vikings, perhaps because of their ancestral predisposition to looting, proved incapable of providing. As the Australian economist Garrick Small points out, "The looting mentality is in a sense juvenile. Reckless and selfish, unable to sustain itself in the long term and implicitly premised on the availability of other more sober souls (parent figures) to come to the rescue when needed."

Jonsson, however, is more American than he lets on because he accepts without reserve the underlying validity of the capitalist system, without seeing that failure is programmed into the system—hence, the need for a lender of last resort. The free market system is

### **Jonsson was the head of research and chief economist at Kaupthing before it went bust.**

generation. Most of these people were born in the years between 1966 and 1976, and they had grown up with an antipathy for politics and regulation. They adopted the American-style investment-brokerage banking model that came to dominate the Icelandic banking sector at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. At the time, few saw the dangerous parallel to the 1920s, when the sector last had lacked a clearly defined lender of last resort (p. 30).

based on recklessness and looting on the one hand and government bail outs on the other, linked in a dialectical relationship to each other. The recklessness of modern capitalism is a function of the sure knowledge that the government is there to bail it out. Or as Jonsson puts it: "This assumption of state support unquestionably helped to fuel the Western banking bubble. . . ." (p. 207).

Instead of engaging in sound financial practices, the modern banking industry relies on this





Asgeir Jonsson

Instead of blaming usury for the collapse of his country's financial industry, Asgeir Jonsson claims that Iceland never had a lender of last resort and that Iceland's banking industry would have survived if the Fed or its European equivalent had extended Iceland a line of credit. This is, of course, true as far as it goes, but it ignores the fact that, ever since the stock market

contracts at once, which means that equity disappears as collateral the minute you try to sell it. That meant that the line of credit/lender of last resort idea was about as plausible here as it would be for a man who had just put the deed of his house down on a number at the roulette table in one of the boats in Michigan City.

It didn't seem that way in 1989. The years between 1997 and 2007 were a golden decade for the Icelandic stock market and investment banking. But the same systemic flaws that were creating wealth were destined to take it away as well. At this time, keeping up with the Joneses of Icelandic business meant leveraged equity investments. The Icelanders were getting rich by taking out the equivalent of home equity loans:

The ICEX market cap was three times the GDP in mid-2007; wealth effects trickled down and took the form of record sales of champagne and luxury cars. In hindsight, this was the point when rational economic calculations came to a halt. The currency was overvalued, household income was unsustainable, and all valuations were skewed. In their ambition, Icelanders had overreached, setting themselves up for merciless punishment in 2008 in which 90 percent of the stock market value was wiped out.

Jon Asgeir Johannesson was a Viking who started out in retail. His father sold fish. His wealth was based on leveraged buyouts. Before long he became "the prime example of the players who made and ultimately broke Iceland. He was a self-made businessman of humble

deus ex machina to rescue it from its own wretched excess. Instead of remaining chaste, the banking industry has decided to screw as many people as possible knowing that they can always get a shot of penicillin if they contract a venereal disease. That penicillin or that deus ex machina is known as the lender of last resort, which is there to insure liquidity in time of financial crisis. The hidden price that everyone pays for the liquidity which the looters need to do business is debasement of the currency, which is another way of saying that system is based on constant systemic inflation, something which has always been the bane of the working man ever since the Florentine oligarchy started paying wages in "white money," i.e., a debased silver coinage. (The Florin, the famous Florentine gold coin used in foreign exchange, was never debased.)

crash of 1929 and the triumph of Keynesian economics, capitalism is a system that is designed to fail and be bailed out by big government after the looters have cashed out of the latest bubble. What follows after the big players cash out is known as the suckers' market, which is announced in Plutocrat organs like Newsweek, when it does articles on how "average Americans" are becoming millionaires by buying up the stock which the looters want to dump.

Iceland was caught in a systemic squeeze that was inevitable. The crisis began when Lehman Brothers went belly up, which meant that money was tight, which meant that the little pigs like the Vikings of Iceland could no longer get their front hooves in the credit trough. In other words, credit is always available, unless you really need it. During the inevitable contractions of the financial system, everything





beginnings. He came of age in the newly liberalized Icelandic economy and "made something out of nothing with little more than wit, work, and daring."

Johannessen was the leveraged buy-out king of Iceland. He parlayed cheap foreign money into a domestic empire whose size rivaled the budget of the state. The secret of his success was the same old LBO story that had wrought so much havoc in America during the '80s: "If the chain [of stores which he bought] was not leveraged upon purchase, then it would simply take on more loans and pay its owner a dividend." Before long "the chain's management soon had overhanging debt that demanded continued success to keep up with it." As we have come to expect in situations like this, it all worked for a while. It was a bit like the man who jumped off of a tall building and, asked while passing the 35<sup>th</sup> floor on the way down how things were going, responded, "so far so

good." Or as Jonsson put it: "At its apex, Iceland was probably coming close to being the richest nation on earth in terms of per capita output. The Bubble was now a dirigible" (p. 104).

Jonsson's book is a tribute to the Middle Ages, and it's not just because it was during this period (or immediately before it) that the Viking raiders became famous. Why Iceland? is a cautionary tale out of the Middle Ages because it is a mene tekel against usury. The economic vice that John Noonan tried to bury in the Middle Ages refuses to go away. Iceland's rise and fall was predicated on debt. Kaupthing (the word in Icelandic means "marketplace") became the model, in Jonsson's words, of "the company that 'had really made it abroad.' . . . It had become the standard bearer of foreign expansion and the source of unbounded national pride." But before long it became apparent that Thor, to mix our metaphors a bit, had an Achilles heel: "a substantial part of the equity being offered was debt financed" (p. 53). Like the homeowner in California who rushed out to buy an RV with the proceeds of an adjustable rate home equity loan, the young Vikings who would become the North Atlantic's leveraged buy-out kings, would do it all on borrowed money. According to Jonsson:

this phase of Icelandic development has a close parallel to changes in the American investment banking that followed the repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act in 1999. Traditionally, US deal brokers had been reluctant to hold risky assets on their balance sheet, endowed as they were with less capital and being less inclined to assume "principal" risk. After Glass-Steagall was overturned, brokers realized that they would need to commit their balance sheets to deals if they were to compete with giants such as Citicorp and JP Morgan Chase. Since they could not accept retail deposits, they enlarged their balance sheets via wholesale markets and funded illiquid assets with long-term debt and equity (p. 55).

The Vikings got rich, in other words, by gambling with poor people's money, which is precisely what the Glass-Steagall Act, which erected a wall of separation between investment banking and deposit/retail banking, was supposed to prevent.

Historically, the financial modernists ignore the fact that the debate over the Church's ban on usury, far from inhibiting commerce, unleashed a storm of financial creativity in late medieval Europe. According to John Noonan, "The contracts of irregular deposit, insurance, annuity, and bills of exchange. . . are all essentially medieval discoveries, and they are directly nurtured, if not fathered by the necessities of the usury theory." The fact that usury was a sin which could deprive a man of eternal salvation led to "detailed rational exploration" of economic issues. This



exploration provided the basis for the modern economy. The problem got articulated in the 300-year period which began in 1150, right around the time that the Crusades created a demand for more sophisticated financial instruments, and it ended in 1450, when St. Antonino of Florence gave the fullest exposition of the Scholastic position.

What followed was either the solution to the problem or a capitulation to the same forces the Church sought to curb—depending, of course, on your point of view. John Noonan claims that Church teaching changed at some point between 1450 and 1550, but, since the church has never said that usury was not a sin, it would be more accurate to say that the Church never got around to answering the questions that she herself had raised. This was the case because of internal and external reasons. To begin with, we are dealing with an ex-

After the looters began seizing Church property, the just price/just wage doctrine was subverted into early mercantile capitalism, and the embattled Church lacked the police power to enforce the law. Conversely, the looters now had governments on their side, and the loot of the Church at their disposal to pursue an economic path unhindered by moral considerations.

St. Thomas Aquinas condemned usury because:

it is manifest that he sells separately the use of the money and the very substance of money. The use of money, however, as it is said, is no other than its substance: when therefore he sells that which is not or he sells the same thing twice, to wit, the money itself, whose use is its consumption; and this is manifestly against the nature of natural justice.

Writing almost two centuries later, St. Bernardine confronted

declaring that if the investor shares the risk, there is no usury. Conversely, St. Bernardine “considers it immoral to profit after ownership has been transferred” (Noonan, p. 72). The usurer, in other words, wanted it both ways. He wanted to give up his money but he also wanted a guaranteed return on money he no longer possessed; he wanted all of the risk assumed by the borrower.

The alleged elimination of risk was the great achievement of the American financial system and the bubble economy of the late 1990s. The elimination of risk made the Glass-Steagall Act unnecessary, and once America showed the way, the rest of the world, which is to say places like Iceland, followed. The elimination of risk, as symbolized by the repeal of Glass-Steagall was a lot like Francis Fukuyama’s contemporaneous “end of history” in that it proved to be a dangerous illusion, especially for people who wanted to act like American plutocrats without the protections from the consequences of their recklessness with which they had surrounded themselves. As Jonsson put it:

Once it was embroiled in the worldwide investment bubble that grew in the late 1990s, the lack of institutional memory allowed all participants, bankers and government officials alike, fundamentally to underestimate systemic risk.

“Early on March 30, 2006,” Jonsson tells us, “about 30 credit investors paid a visit to Kaupthing’s headquarters in Reykjavik.” If the Vikings were hoping for praise, they were in for

## Jon Asgeir Johannessen was the leveraged buy-out king of Iceland.

tremely complicated issue, one that caused casuists, moralists, and confessors to throw up their hands in despair when confronted in the confessional. But there were extrinsic reasons for this lack of closure as well. The unity of Christendom was shattered by the Protestant revolt in 1517, which itself was spurred on to no small extent by economic principles. Langholm noted that the usury prohibitions fell across Europe in its wake.

“the capitalistic activity which characterized the economic life of the northern Italian cities” by citing Joannes Andreae, who claimed that “that fungibles [i.e., money] should not increase beyond their determined value.” More importantly for our purposes, “St. Bernardine repeats Andreae’s reasoning upon the argument that ownership passes in a loan.”

The crucial issue is risk. All scholastic thinkers were of one mind in





a rude awakening. "This is not a bank but a hedge fund!" exclaimed one gentleman. "And by the way, where will you fund yourselves in the future?" Jonsson tells us that "No one missed the dark undertone of that morning" (p. 58). What he fails to tell us is that the Vikings had run into a more powerful group of looters. The issue was technological. It was as if the Vikings had waded ashore in 9<sup>th</sup> century England only to discover that the natives had set up a series of machine gun nests in the tree line just beyond the beach. The Vikings jumped out of their dragon boats screaming like banshees and brandishing their battle axes only to be mowed down by a withering burst of machine gun fire.

The technological advance which had similarly withering effect on Viking bravado in 2006 was known as the credit default swap. Iceland's precarious situation in 2006 was largely the result of

the J.P. Morgan firm's invention nine years earlier of a particular kind of derivative contract which Warren Buffet would later call "financial weapons of mass destruction." The credit default swap allowed the big looters from New York to "express their bearishness by taking short positions against Icelandic banks. This was the so-called

credit default swap; as it was popularized, it became the red flag that drew international attention to Iceland and set the 2006 crisis in motion" (p. 61). Jonsson continues:

The credit default swap spreads of the Icelandic banks had so widened as to effectively block them out of the international wholesale financial market. News wires stated almost daily that Iceland was "melting."

The term "credit default swap" was intentionally deceptive and the purpose of the intention behind the deception was to disguise the fact that the CDS was a form of insurance. The looters wanted to disguise this fact because insurance was subject to government regulation of the sort that the looters wanted to avoid.

Why the New York looters wanted to avoid regulation became apparent early on. A credit default swap is the equivalent of insuring

your neighbor's home and then burning it down to collect the insurance money. Actually, the situation is much worse than that. As Jonsson points out,

If the conventional insurance market operated in the same, unregulated manner, it would be possible for one—or many—persons to insure a house that they do not own. Thus the claim on the insurance company would be a multiple of the actual worth of the house and, should it be burned down, all the insurers would be able to pocket a sizable gain.

The CDS, in other words, creates "a convenient way of shorting bonds and make[s] it possible to build up a volume of contracts that far exceed the value of the bond in question, but they also create a perverse incentive when many parties stand to gain from a company's default."

In addition to creating a "perverse incentive," the credit default swap creates the economic version of the self-fulfilling prophecy:

A large widening in the CDS spread thus prices a bank out of the funding markets, drains its liquidity, and erodes its confidence to the extent that a failure can easily become a self-fulfilling prophecy. A CDS spread widening, perhaps as a result of speculation, is a modern version of a bank run in the wholesale financial markets. Shorting in the CDS market of a respective company can be compounded by a shorting of its stock to double-down the negative impact on its market confidence. On small, open economies, a third front of attack can be



opened by shorting the domestic currency, since depreciation will erode confidence by creating turbulence in the financial system, with rising inflation and ballooning of currency-linked debt.

As of early 2006, the New York looters, i.e., the hedge fund managers who had been monitoring the CDS spreads, had decided that Iceland was, in Jonsson's words, "a sitting duck." Like the wolves that had an uncanny sense of picking out the weakest deer in the herd, the hedge funds moved in for the kill.

In spite of what John Noonan wrote in 1957, the issue in 2006, as well as 600 years earlier, was risk, which is another way of saying that the issue was usury, because avoidance of risk and usury are, from a financial perspective, two sides of the same coin. St. Bernardine insisted on "the principle that where an investment of any kind is made whose risk is not borne by the investor, there is usury." He stated as an axiom, "the thing perishes to the owner." The illusion of riskless investment (which is precisely what a credit default swap hopes to insure) is, as Iceland had to learn the hard way, another word for usury (or, perhaps, usury on steroids), which invariably leads to the ruin of those who fall into its clutches. The Church, as I have already mentioned, never disapproved of any financial arrangement in which the lender shared the risk of the venture. That was known as a partnership.

What arose in Italy during the course of the late Middle Ages was precisely the desire for "riskless in-

vestment" that engendered the credit default swap at J. P. Morgan in 1997. St. Bernardine made it clear that: "A deposit with an exchange banker or merchant at a fixed rate is usury. In particular, if a widow deposits with a merchant with the agreement that her capital be safe and that she get half the profit, she sins mortally" (Noonan, p. 174).

Writing a generation later, St. Antonino of Florence concurred. The "depositum," which is to say, a savings account, was "a widely used fraud of the leisured classes with surplus funds to invest." As he says in his own words, "and [even] though they call this a deposit, it is clearly usury." That is the case because "a true deposit stands to the peril of the depositor, not to that of the depository."

The church approved of insurance, of course, especially as a means of securing risk in maritime commerce. St. Antonino defended

ing risk, a practice which found Church approval, did not eliminate risk, any more than a piece of paper could eliminate a storm at sea, the situation with maritime insurance. But usury did eliminate risk in a way that was totally dishonest, which is to say, it eliminated risk to the lender, the stronger partner in the transaction. Usury, in other words, allowed the strong to take advantage of the weak in a way that made it a sin against both justice and charity.

The fact that insurance of property was universally accepted by scholastic theologians created problems of its own because eventually insurance became the device which allowed approval of usury in through the back door. By the time Lessius and the Jesuits approved the triple contract during the latter part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, insurance had become another word for riskless investment, which meant that it had become usury. Noonan

**The technological advance which had similarly withering effect on Viking bravado in 2006 was known as the credit default swap.**

insurance as "the rendering of a service for a price." As a result, "property insurance, in which an owner for a fee transferred the risks of his property to an insurer, had become familiar to all the commercial cities of Italy" by the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Noonan, p. 201). By now, it should be obvious that sell-

cites Lessius as the typical example of the "steady growth in the amount of profit on riskless capital considered licit by the theologians" of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

True to the hermeneutic he used to undermine the Church's teaching on contraception seven years after his book on usury appeared,



Noonan claimed that the theologians of the 16<sup>th</sup> century were involved in an “intricate analysis” whose ultimate purpose was “justifying commercial credit,” but Peter Ballerini, who brought out a new edition of the *Summa Theologiae* of St. Antonino in 1740 rearticulated the same principle that St. Antonino used to indict the rentier class of capitalistic Florence, namely, “when the risk is removed in the insured partnership, the investor loses all title to compensation. . . . When the capitalist gets fixed or riskless return, the contract becomes a loan,” and if he takes interest on that loan, he commits the sin of usury.

Two years later, Pope Benedict XIV issued his encyclical *Vix pervenit*, in which the Church once again reasserted the scholastic position and condemned usury as sinful: “It is certainly no excuse to say that the profit on a loan is moderate, or that the loan is to a rich man or to be used for production purposes.” However, in the course of this encyclical, Benedict claimed that “At the same time it cannot be denied that here are extrinsic titles by which something beyond the principal may be demanded on a loan, and there are also licit contracts, distinct from a loan, by which money may be profitably employed.”

At this point the pope throws up his hands in frustration and admits that the ability to distinguish between intrinsic titles, which are sinful, and extrinsic titles, which are not, is above his pay grade, and that is essentially where the *status questionis* has remained ever since.

In the meantime, confessors in cities like Augsburg, where the

Fuggers had succeeded the Medicis as bankers to the Holy See, capitulated to pressure, which often included the threat of jail time, to justify the triple contract, which was, at least according to some of the Jesuits there, usury under the guise of insurance. As Noonan puts it, “The moralists’ acceptance of the [triple] contract meant the practical exclusion of the old usury theory from business finance.” There were holdouts—Molina implied that the triple contract was “merely a roundabout way of legitimating *lucrum cessans*”—but over the long haul:

Acceptance of the [triple] contract meant the definitive rejection of the theses that any temporary, riskless transfer of property was usury; that the incidence of risk was the criterion of ownership; that money was sterile and could not bring a reward to itself. . . . The triple contract established definitively that a riskless transfer need not be usury; it destroyed the use of risk as the index of ownership by the usury theorists; and it made dominant for usury theory the concept of capital which partnership analysis had always implied.

This paved the way for the rise of exchange banking, which in turn paved the way for the meltdown in Iceland five centuries later. Jonsson sounds strangely medieval when he claims that the structural Flaw in the debt-securitization market was the absence of risk:

We now know that the debt-securitization market contained a structural flaw that contributed mightily to the current financial and banking crises, especially in the United

States: the ability to earn large fees from originating and securitizing loans, coupled with the lack of any residual liability, skewed originator’s incentives in favor of loan volume and return rather than quality. This was most evident in the use of the so-called sub-prime mortgages in structured credit, and it was this practice that, starting in 2006, sucked the Icelandic financial system into the brewing US credit bubble. When the bubble burst a year later, it was at first called the “sub-prime crisis” (p. 90).

Jonsson failed to understand that the elimination of risk is another word for usury, which is another word for the ability of the stronger partner in any transaction to exploit the weaker. This meant that the total elimination of risk meant an exponential increase in the power of the lender over the borrower, something that became apparent in August 2007, when Iceland was rocked with its first significant liquidity crisis. Jonsson’s analysis of this crisis makes its “systemic” nature apparent:

If the need arose, liquidating the whole system in an orderly fashion proved impossible. This, like much else, worked well until stock markets the world over found themselves in a systemic liquidity crisis after August 2007. Both the banks and the holding companies were rendered nearly illiquid by the shock. At the same time, the holding companies were monitored relentlessly by foreign short traders and hedge funds. These predators would jump on any rumor about an immediate sale of foreign holdings and short the company’s main as-



sets, effectively blocking its exit. Exista, for one, was a sitting duck in this game. Shorting its three main listed assets brought down the equity ratio and, the hedge funds hoped, would trigger a margin call and a forced sale. Which it eventually did.

The Icelandic financial empire was in reality a house of cards. Ultimately, it was based on the approval of foreign banks who soon began to view the Vikings as upstart competitors who were threatening the system whose cheap money the Vikings needed to survive. Once the word got out, everything happened at once: "The inflated sheets crumpled as soon as the foreign banks withdrew their support in response to the crisis inside the international financial markets. Their sheer weight was almost enough to crush the banks" (p. 97).

### **Jonsson failed to understand that the elimination of risk is another word for usury.**

The house of cards was based on debt, and debt was based on usury, which is by its nature predatory. "Too much debt was programmed into the leveraged buyouts that were the basis of Iceland's newfound prosperity. . . . The Icelandic bankers' . . . biggest fault was a willingness to accept equity as collateral." The Vikings were doomed to learn that he who lives by the debt sword dies by the debt sword.

On the night of January 31, 2008, Jonsson and a group of

Kaupthing traders and analysts met a group of hedge fund managers from Merrill Lynch and Bear Stearns who were on a junket to scout out investment possibilities. The meeting at the bar of 101, one of Reykjavik's trendiest hotels, quickly turned ugly. The New York looters, who had been drinking heavily, "were a contemptuous lot who were convinced that they had landed in a country full of rubes." But the worst was yet to come, when Joe, who looked like a "New York cop," informed the Vikings that that "All the people in this party are shorting Iceland, except me." The New York looters had decided to take down Iceland. In the end it didn't matter "how developed, sophisticated or rich anyone was if they were not liquid in a time of crisis." Everyone knew that there was no lender of last resort willing to save Iceland. Secure in

that knowledge, the hedge funds moved in for the kill: "The CDS spread, which had been about 50 basis points above the Libor in August, reached 200 points by the year's end. This metric helped distinguish Iceland as the weak deer in the herd, which brought the hedge funds in for the kill in 2008" (p. 116).

Frozen out of the money markets, the Vikings decided to get into retail banking, in particular, Internet banking in England and

Holland. Icesave, the Internet banking operation that the Vikings created to get the money the big central banks denied them, quickly accumulated roughly \$12 billion in deposits. At this point the New York looters joined forces with their English counterparts and started spreading false reports about the stability of Iceland's banks. On March 30, 2008 two UK papers ran virtually identical articles questioning the stability of Icesave. Jonsson later found out that "a number of 'helpful' hedge funds had voluntarily provided the press with information about Icelandic banks."

By now the strategy was clear, the hedge funds wanted to create a run on the bank and make money on their CDSs. On March 28, David Oddsson claimed that "unscrupulous dealers . . . have decided to make a last stab at breaking down the Icelandic financial system" and called for an international investigation. Shortly thereafter, Iceland's central bank learned that the three major central banks in the Western world had hung Iceland out to dry. There would be no lender of last resort for Iceland. Too many powerful people stood to earn too much money if Iceland went down.

Iceland then attempted to solve the crisis by selling off its assets, but as soon as she tried to deleverage, Iceland found that "selling assets at steep discounts . . . cut into their equity positions and broke covenants on existing bond issues." The issue was, in other words, systemic. As soon as the Vikings needed to sell, the value of their assets disappeared and their debts became unrepayable. With their credit lines cut off and no





lender of last resort in sight, Iceland learned the hard way that she was not too big to fail. Then in September, Lehman Brothers joined the not-too-big-to-fail club and precipitated another more severe liquidity crisis, and this time, Icesave, whose depositors could bank by computer 24 hours a day seven days a week, faced the prospect of a real run on the bank.

On the morning of October 18, Chancellor of the Exchequer Alastair Darling announced on BBC Radio that: "The Icelandic government, believe it or not, has told me yesterday, they have no intention of honoring their obligations here." At this point Gordon Brown, England's prime minister, entered the picture. At 9:15 of the same morning, Brown announced that he was "taking legal action against the Icelandic authorities to recover the money lost to people

who deposited in UK branches of its banks."

Depending on who you talk to, Brown was 1) concerned about the safety of English savings deposits in Icesave accounts or 2) acting as an agent of England's retail banking industry and determined to eliminate an unwelcome competitor. (According to Jonsson, "Rumor had it that the Bank of England and the European Central Bank had decided to open lines to Ice-

land at first, but changed course after heavy lobbying by their own domestic banks, which were infuriated by the online deposit gathering.") Either way, after Chancellor of the Exchequer Alastair Darling failed to get reassurance from David Oddsson that he, as head of the Central Bank of Iceland, would guarantee English deposits, Brown made the unprecedented financial move of declaring that Iceland was a "terrorist" nation and seized its assets. At this point economic activity ceased entirely in Iceland:

The nation's international payment system collapsed. Funds sent to other countries were held up at some banks, or simply disappeared. Money could not be sent outside the island. Most banks simply refused either to send or to receive Icelandic payments. . . . All at once, everything Iceland-

dic has become toxic, untouchable, banished to a place outside the world of business.

Iceland has been trying to dig itself out from underneath the financial rubble ever since. During the crisis in the fall of 2008, Icelanders who were abroad learned that their credit cards no longer worked. Before long, this nation of 300,000 people learned that Icesave's exposure in England and Holland stood at about \$12 billion, which is to say, an amount equal to 60 percent of Iceland's Gross Domestic Product. When the Icelandic krona tanked in October, "the ratio ballooned to 80 percent." Before long, the media in Iceland were comparing Iceland's situation to the ruinous reparations payments that the Germans were forced to pay after World War I, which amounted to 85 percent of the German GNP.

What followed was a debate in Iceland between the isolationists and those who wanted full membership in the European Union. David Oddsson, according to Jonsson, "blamed the 'Viking raiders' who had leveraged the country abroad for the ultimate collapse." The isolationists wanted to default on the debt the Viking raiders had saddled them with, but in the end the Europhiles prevailed. On November 17, under the threat of expulsion from the European Economic Area, the government of Iceland accepted liability for the Icesave accounts. Three days later, Iceland accepted the recovery plan prepared for it by the International Monetary Fund. As anyone who has read *Confessions of an Economic Hitman* knows, this all but guarantees Iceland's exclusion from the club of elite financial players it



sought to crash during the brief summer of Icelandic finance and its inclusion in the club of third world losers who have to mortgage their natural resources to pay off predatory IMF loans. "IMF loans," Jonsson states laconically, "were granted only under stringent conditions that compromise the sovereignty of the nations they aid."

Needless to say, the Icelandic nation is going to have to catch a lot of cod before they can pay off this bill. In fact, in the absence of another bubble of the sort that created the debt in the first place, they will probably never pay it off.

Jonsson ends his book by wondering if what happened to Iceland might happen to another country. At the time of the writing of this review, Greece was in the news as another country which had been saddled with unrepayable debt. At least the Greeks didn't do it to themselves. They have the good folks at Goldman Sachs to thank for their woes.

Jonsson ends his book by invoking the Icelandic equivalent of karma. What happened in Iceland could just as easily happen in England. That eventuality prompted William Buitter to ask in the Financial Times, "Is London really Reykjavik on the Thames?" Switzerland, which also has a nonconvertible currency and a banking sector much larger than the Gross National Product, is equally vulnerable. In fact, when it comes to "devouring usury," the entire world is at risk. Whether it's debt-burdened students or debt-burdened countries, no one is safe from the greed of the looters.

---

**E. MICHAEL JONES**

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## **OINKONOMICS, CONT'D FROM P. 35**

*charity* (Q.A. 88). Even then, it did not receive a specific definition until Blessed John XXIII provided one in *Mater et Magistra*, and repeated it in *Pacem in Terris*, after which it was included in the Vatican II *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*. Unfortunately, without clear definition, such important principles tend to drift into the category of vague generalities or slogans so that their real meaning may become obscure, even distorted. For example, the important virtue, *social justice* was misconstrued for so long and in so many ways, that it is even used today by some persons as a slur.

---

## **BIOETHICS**

Bioethics is cited here by Pope Benedict as one area where advancing technology has had a frightening impact in the recent modern era. He deals with it near the end of the encyclical as an area "where the very possibility of integral human development is radically called into question"(74). That is because we have moved closer to "the brave new world" of, one must say, the dehumanized future. This involves knowledge about "not just how life is conceived, but also how it is manipulated, as bio-technology places it increasingly under man's control." Thus: "*In vitro* fertilization, embryo research, the possibility of manufacturing clones and human hybrids: all this is now emerging and being promoted in today's highly disillusioned culture, which believes it has mastered every mystery, because the origin of

life is now within our grasp." The implications are the more frightening because the dominant "culture of death" also has all of this new technology at its disposal. Thus, what are we to expect "at the other end of the spectrum?" What use will the pro-euthanasia forces make of his new technology? And what will the impact be on "the mentality for development?" (75)

Following the portrayal of that bleak picture, Pope Benedict XVI ended with a presentation of what he has to offer as the head of the largest Christian denomination on earth. He proposed that, "*Development needs Christians with their arms raised toward God* in prayer, Christians moved by the knowledge that truth-filled love, *caritas in veritate*, from which authentic development proceeds, is not produced by us but given unto us"(79).

Then as the leader of the oldest of the Christian denominations, Pope Benedict XVI closed with something specific to the Roman Catholic Church. He included a prayer to the Virgin Mary who was proclaimed *Mater Ecclesiae* (Mother of the Church) by Pope Paul VI, asking for her help in the task of bringing about what that pope laid the groundwork for in his own encyclical *Populorum Progressio*: "the development of the whole man and all men." (77,79)



# Bullets

\* Did tournament sponsors procure women for Tiger Woods to induce him to play?

\* "We believe that the tide of history is moving ... toward a recognition that gays and lesbians, no less than heterosexuals, are entitled to sanctify their love in marriage," editorialized the *Washington Post*. Sanctify? Does the stridently secular *Post* think gay marriages are holy? More likely it's taunting those who believe in marriage's sanctity.

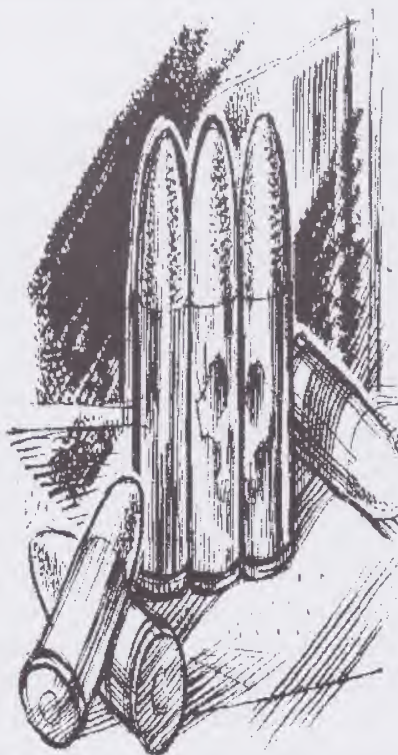
\* The Ultimate Unreality? Kwdit allows teens who don't have a credit card to buy virtual goods by promising to pay later. The teen then brings cash to a 7-Eleven or mails it in.

\* What is real money? A dollar bill is a promise by the Federal Reserve to do what? What does full faith and credit mean if a government inflates its currency?

\* Fear that Bill Clinton's globe-trotting post-presidential philandering would be a campaign issue induced Democratic leaders and donors to quash Hillary's 2008 presidential bid, according to the book *Game Change*. Looks like Hillary's still dominated by Bill's libido.

\* House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, a pro-abortion Catholic, initially covered up reports of Congressman Eric Massa's sexual improprieties with male staff members. This is the issue on which she chooses to follow our bishops' lead?

\* Is the White House a Hate Group? "It must be stated clearly and simply. Unfortunately, there is an anti-Semitic president in America," Hagi Ben-Artzi, the brother-in-law of Israeli P.M. Benjamin Netanyahu said on Israeli radio. "The truth must be told," he



said in another interview. "Obama is an anti-Semite." Someone notify the SPLC, please.

\* Chastity Bono, daughter of Sonny and Cher, has asked a judge to formally change her name (to Chaz) and gender, submitting a doctor's declaration that he performed a gender-change operation. Bono calls the gender change "the best decision I've ever made." We surely don't want to know what worse decisions Bono's made.

\* An Executive Order? Even if a presidential order could override a law, Pres. Obama or another president could modify or rescind the order at will. Rep. Bart Stupak's health care reform capitulation exposed the charade that there are pro-life Democrats.

\* When the *NY Times* attacked the pope for not, when Cardinal-head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, defrocking Fr. Lawrence Murphy of Milwaukee, who had sexually abused deaf children, the Vatican said that because "Fr. Murphy was elderly and in very poor health, and ... living in seclusion and no allegations of

**JAMES G. BRUEN, JR.**

E-Mail: [cwbullets@yahoo.com](mailto:cwbullets@yahoo.com)

abuse had been reported in over 20 years, the [CDF] suggested that the archbishop of Milwaukee give consideration to addressing the situation by, for example, restricting Fr. Murphy's public ministry and requiring that Fr. Murphy accept full responsibility for the gravity of his acts. Fr. Murphy died approximately four months later, without further incident." The CDF seems to have handled the case well: justice with mercy. If he'd been defrocked, the *NY Times* would find a different reason to attack.

\* Why, though, didn't the Vatican depose Rembert Weakland, Milwaukee's gay archbishop?

\* "Yup, we need a Nope," wrote the *NY Times's* Maureen Dowd, attacking Benedict XVI. "A nun who is pope." What a dope. "Should there be an inquisition for the pope?" she also asked. Maybe she'd like to waterboard Benedict? If the Inquisition is revived, she'd better hope it doesn't look for witches.

\* Speaking of Witch Hunts. "The Catholic Church must be held accountable," says columnist Cal Thomas. "A formal investigation should be conducted, which exempts no one, including the pope. It should be run by people not in the church hierarchy or beholden to it. Anything less will not satisfy public opinion, much less a Higher Authority." If the Church were trying to satisfy public opinion, Cal, it'd have to jettison its moral teachings. And the "Higher Authority" surely needs no investigation.

\* My thanks to those who spoke to me at CW's The End of Dialogue and Beginning of Unity Conference. I enjoyed meeting you.



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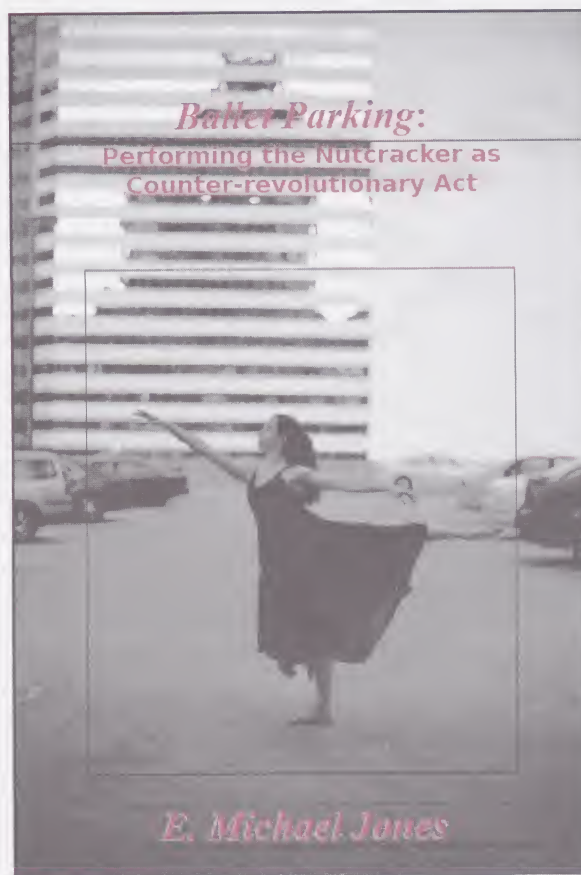
By E. Michael Jones

The Nutcracker began as a German fairy tale. It then became a Russian ballet, and now, in its latest incarnation, it has become an American ritual. Every year mothers from the suburbs surrounding South Bend, Indiana set out in their vans and SUVs to slay the rat king in a military campaign against the rats and everything they symbolize. Every year they volunteer their little boys and girls as soldiers in the culture wars so that they can defeat the rats of appetite and disorder and chaos by wielding the weapons of truth, beauty, and grace. The Nutcracker is the 21<sup>st</sup> century version of the Children's Crusade.

The *Ballet Parking* DVD supplements this analysis with footage of Nutcracker rehearsals and performances at Southhold Dance Theater, as well as interviews with the artistic directors and the people behind the scenes that make these yearly performances possible. The DVD also makes use of Soviet archival footage, which includes extraordinary shots of Lenin and train sequences that look like something out of Dr. Zhivago, as well as footage of riots during the American cultural revolution of the '60s. It even contains footage of Napoleon invading Russia taken from Soviet era feature films, as well as a soundtrack that is an anthology of the best music in the ballet repertoire. This book/dvd makes an ideal Christmas present for the culturally astute.

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JUNE 2010  
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# Culture Wars



**The Great Hutaree Bust:  
Dogpatch calls for insurrection**

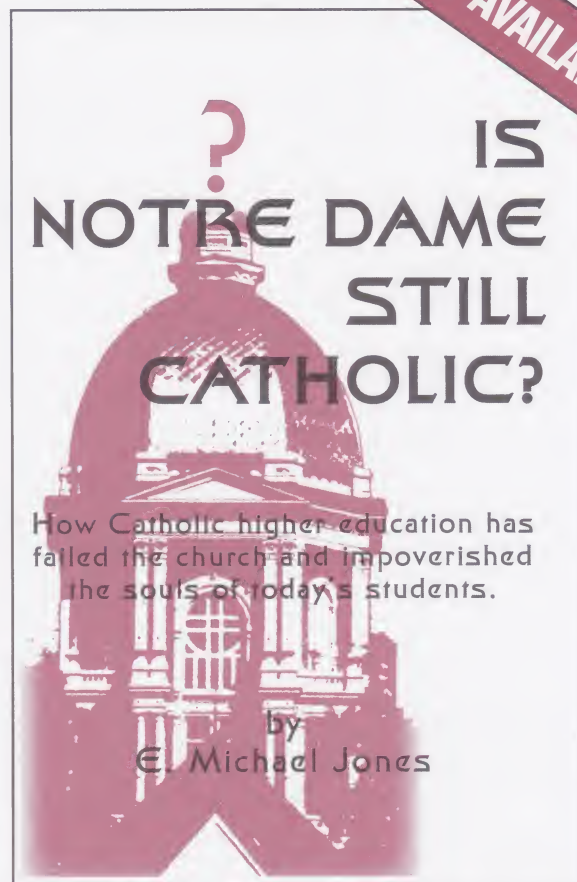


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On March 25, 2009, Notre Dame was embroiled in the biggest controversy to hit the campus since the performance of The Vagina Monologues. A few days earlier, Notre Dame president John Jenkins, CSC had announced that the university planned to give President Barack Obama an honorary doctorate. Within hours of the announcement a storm of protest erupted which showed no sign of dying down any time soon. Citing the statement of the US Catholic Bishops in 2004, "The Catholic community and Catholic institutions should not honor those who act in defiance of our fundamental moral principles. They should not be given awards, honors or platforms which would suggest support for their actions" the ordinary of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, John M. D'Arcy announced that, for the first time in 25 years, he would not be attending graduation ceremonies at Notre Dame, because "President Obama has recently affirmed, and has now placed in public policy, his long stated unwillingness to hold human life as sacred."

*By April, 2009 over 250,000 people had signed a petition condemning Notre Dame's actions, and Bishop Thomas J. Olmstead of the Phoenix, Arizona diocese joined with his colleague Bishop D'Arcy in denouncing Jenkins' decision, calling the decision to honor President Obama a "public act of disobedience" and a "grave mistake."*

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# Culture Wars

*"No social progress outside the moral order."*



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# LETTERS

## EVOLUTIONARY MODERNISM

You are certainly to be commended for your very informative survey of the history of nature worship. However, I cannot agree with your conclusion (p. 19) that the first reason that Dawn Brancheau jumped into the tank to ride on and play with the killer whale is capitalism.

While it is true that the lust for money-power dominates our culture, I see a more primary reason for what is certainly an expression of explicit bestiality in the photograph on the cover of *Culture Wars* for April 2010. And this overt bestiality, especially as it has taken the place of the normal process of childbearing I see as the culminating expression of the evolutionary worldview that dominates our culture worldwide, having taken the place of the Biblical-Catholic-Christian worldview.

Evolution, both cosmic and terrestrial, teaches us today, from Kindergarten on, that we are made in the image of beasts, having evolved from the lower animals. Is it not natural, then, that this ideology would culminate in the kind of overt bestiality we can see in Dawn Brancheau's chosen profession? It is a progression in evil, beginning in the mind as a scientific "fact" and leading, therefore, to praiseworthy practices such as we see so commonly portrayed in the media and in real life. You document this progression in cultural decadence very well and accurately.

But I submit that you miss the real cause, which is not in the political or economic sphere but rather in the philosophical-ideological sphere. The only remedy is, as you well indicate, a return to the Catholic teaching that grace does not destroy nature but

rather heals and perfects our nature wounded by the original sin of Adam and Eve. I don't see any hope of this happening until Catholics realize that our culture is presently dominated by an intrinsically evil ideologically inspired scientism that Pope St. Pius X described and condemned in his Encyclical *Pascendi* and Syllabus *Lamentabili* (both in 1907). That Catholic intellectuals like yourself consistently fail to expose this primary root "synthesis of all heresies" that is evolutionary Modernism is the main reason why it continues to flourish and bring about the loss of unknown numbers of souls.

Paula Haigh  
Nazareth, Kentucky

## LIBERAL LUNATICS

Your essay on Dawn Brancheau's death at SeaWorld was insightful to say the least. So many young people are misled by the liberal lunatics of our time. This young woman believed whales to be her children and, even more delusional, I think she believed that whales thought she was their mother!

Stephen J. Sanborn  
Mead, Washington

## APRIL ISSUE

Re: your April 2010 issue, the article by Mr. Pogonowski, p. 12. Lenin died January 21, 1924, not 1923.

John W. W. Cooper  
New York, New York

## THEOCONS AND NEOCONS

Thanks and congratulations to Anthony S. McCarthy for his article "Moral Squeamishness" in the February 2010 *CW*. He performed great research and made insightful conclusions on *Standpoint*, the latest neocon magazine to come on the scene urging endless war against the Arabic and Muslim world. What I'm about to relate shows that the neocon obsession with war and revolution or, to use one of the neocons' favorite terms, "creative destruction," has infiltrated Protestantism as well as Catholicism.

United Church of God is a spin-off from Herbert W. Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God, and they publish the newsletter *World News & Prophecy*. One of its writers is John Ross Schroeder, who cites one neocon publication or commentator after another; he has cited Melanie Phillips many times in his ardent support of the "War on Terror!" and his unwavering support for Israel's government. After reading Mr. McCarthy's review of *Standpoint*, I said to myself that the very next time I read Mr. Schroeder in *WNEP*, he's not only going to cite *Standpoint*, but praise its writers as if they are the only ones with the right answers for the Middle East; and that's exactly what he did, to a tee.

The article where he cited *Standpoint* was another anti-Muslim, anti-Arab warning that if aggressive war isn't waged by UK and US, the star and crescent moon will fly over the entire Western world. The only photo to accompany the article was of a burqa-wearing jihadist holding a rocket launcher with his left hand while resting it upon his shoulder. *Standpoint* editor Daniel Johnson is



praised as "insightful" for urging aggressive war, in stark contrast to the goofy yet professorial photo of him in Mr. McCarthy's article. The Protestant theocons believe that waging aggressive, unjust war against Muslims and Arabs is justified and proper because it takes out enemies of the Jews living in Israel, while the Catholic theocons want to recapture lands from Mohammed's armies; hence the unholy alliance between the theocons and the Jewish neocons.

After reading Mr. McCarthy's lengthy review of this latest journal of neocon propaganda, one can only give some kind of morbid credit to this cabal: they use scholarship, sophistication, sophistry, flattery, deception, trickery, and even a wee bit of modern-day witchcraft to infiltrate and eventually take over Christian and pseudo-Christian churches and organizations and use them to teach anti-Christ precepts promoting immoral war, torture, ethnic and tribal favoritism and allegiance, and hatred of Arabs and Islam while rarely voicing opposition to any other non-Christian religion.

With "Moral Squeamishness," Anthony S. McCarthy and E. Michael Jones have fired a shot across the bow of this latest assault ship of the neocon armada. And like so many things that float across the pond, it's probably only a matter of time before *Standpoint* winds up in bookstores and on news-stands in America.

Kenneth Reynolds  
Bronx, New York

## MEN UPON THE RACK

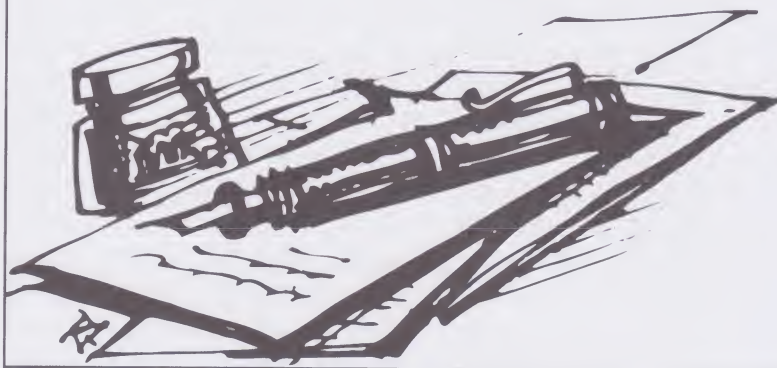
Reading the last copy of *Culture Wars* I thought I had opened *The*

*Weekly Standard* by mistake; a letter to the editor seemed to be written by Bill Kristol. Closer examination revealed that it came from a Catholic priest. Having read a book by "a faithful Catholic," Mark Thiessen, concerning torture, the good Father exonerates the CIA., showing how waterboarding is just a scary experience, besides, the Muslims have a get out of jail free card. They can just tell Allah, I did my best, and all is forgiven.

More than 150 detainees have died in custody, perhaps Father Harrison can explain the picture of the cadaver on ice with the female prison guard smiling, giving the thumbs up, it is my understanding

the guards had nothing to do with his death. How often have we heard the statement, "they sang like canaries"? One would think after this songfest, Osama Bin Laden and Mullah Omar would be posing for the *New York Post* in their burial shrouds. The body encased in ice was that of Manadel al Jamadi who was brought to Abu Ghraib by CIA agents for interrogation. One hour later he was dead; military pathologists ruled his death a homicide [sic, suicide], but who believes them? One could reasonably expect that the songs they were singing were requests from the audience. The guards were not questioning them. The CIA was enticing them to sing, so

*Culture Wars* welcomes letters to the editor. Preference will be given to letters which deal with topics discussed in the magazine. Letters should ideally be limited to one single-spaced page, but we know how difficult it is to follow ideals in this world. Letters can be sent by mail to Culture Wars, 206 Marquette Ave., South Bend, IN 46617; by fax to 219-289-1461; or by electronic mail to [Jones@culturewars.com](mailto:Jones@culturewars.com).





they gave them the old favorites, like Saddam was training terrorists in biological warfare, music to Cheney's ears, no doubt. This melody was so beautiful that it sent then Secretary of State Colin Powell to the UN, where he enraptured the members, sent the Main Stream Media swooning, and we were off to War with Iraq.

Since the learned priest gave a plug to Thiessen's book, let me close with a similar recommendation, the documentary, *Taxi to the Dark Side*. The Afghan Dilawar must have been unaware of the "curious clause in their theology," since he also ended up dead. The American military coroner stated that Diwar was the victim of a homicide, while being tuned up for a solo with the CIA. The enlisted men went to prison; the CIA officers were not even questioned. As Shakespeare wrote, "I fear that you speak as men upon the rack where men enforced do speak anything."

Stephen J. Peters  
Congers, New York

## THE TORTURE PRIEST

I have been enjoying *Culture Wars* for quite a number of years now and very much appreciate your efforts in regard to the pursuit of Catholic truth. Your article on The Weber Thesis (February 2010) was exceptional and I recommended to all my acquaintances the portion you made available at the CW website. I was hoping that you might continue that theme in the March issue but, when I expectantly turned to the first page of the Letters section, I was appalled to find another disinformation-

filled letter from Fr. Brian Harrison.

It is quite beyond my understanding why you continue to publish such lies — without any disclaimer — and thereby lend the pages of CW to the propagation of Fox News-like evil. You chose to publish an extended piece of drivel from this Fr. Harrison in your February 2009 issue in which, among several items of propaganda and monumental illogic, the gentle Father offers that the current war in Iraq is not unjust because, according to him, it is a completely "new war" from that of our initial unjust conquest and that we are, therefore, morally obliged to stay and clean up the mess we made. (Thus, if a thief breaks into your house, murders and rapes your relatives, destroys your furnishings and livelihood; he is morally obliged to stay there and continue his depredations until he gets around to fixing what he broke, should he ever decide to do so.) And now we are treated to the good Father's endorsement of American waterboarding because, *mirabile visu*, it is not really torture at all and, WOW, we are getting just loads of "lifesaving" information out of it.

Contrary to what the reverend Father would like your readers to believe, American waterboard torture is a grotesque evil. Excellent recent discussions of our torture methods can be found in the articles of Mark Benjamin ("Waterboarding for Dummies," 3/9/10) and Glenn Greenwald ("What every American should be made to learn about the IG Torture Report," 8/24/09, and "The Crime of not 'Looking Backward,'" 1/19/10) at Salon.com among many

other articles easily found on the internet, as I am sure you are aware. Not only is waterboarding, as practiced under the auspices of the CIA and their Israeli helpers, extremely brutal and deadly, not only is the so-called waterboarding training that the US Navy and Marines receive not comparable to these torture practices but there have been at least 100 deaths during or as a result of such torture sessions. But certainly the military received some wonderful "lifesaving" information from torturing people, who are planning such outrageous activities as trying to kill American soldiers just because they have occupied their country and murdered their relatives. Can you imagine? Although it is not completely clear that the leads came from torture, it appears likely that such actionable "intelligence" was recently demonstrated by the raids of General McCrystal's death squads in Khataba in February in which two pregnant women, a young girl, a policeman and a government prosecutor were murdered by SOCOM forces (who then tried to cover it up only to have it revealed through the persistence of the British reporter Jerome Starkey after the initial, high-level cover-up was implemented) and the murders of the 9 young boys in Kunar in December, who were bound hand and foot and then executed by American mercenaries and their CIA handlers. (I would recommend to the attention of your readers the columns of retired Naval Commander Jeff Huber on the psychopathic serial killer McCrystal and his associates, available at Antiwar.com, particularly his recent offering "McCrackers," 4/6/10.)



I am sure it has escaped the devout Father's notice but, as noted by Robert Fisk last year, among numerous other writers, we have reached a most significant milestone in Iraq and can all be proud to have killed, severely injured or driven from their homes over half the population of Iraq. Let me repeat that for emphasis: *we have killed, severely wounded, injured or driven from their homes over half the population of Iraq*. But, as the Father noted a year ago, the Iraqi are just ecstatic to have us there, particularly the lackeys we have bribed to betray their countrymen. Things are just *soooo* much better than life under Saddam, except for all the corpses, cripples, and the now regnant Western Culture which has been inflicted upon them. Unfortunately, it appears that the "life-saving" about which the dear Father spoke was not that of Iraqis or Afghans, the value of the deaths of our subjects being much inferior to those of their American masters. And please also note that, due to the demographics of these countries, whenever you read about us killing dozens or hundreds or millions of these unfortunates, that, on average, half of them are *children* and half are *women*. Should your readers want to hear the perspective of an actual Iraqi, rather than the fever dreams of the loving Father, they can still visit the postings of the Iraqi girl blogger, Riverbend, at [riverbendblog.blogspot.com](http://riverbendblog.blogspot.com), which are still available even though she also has been forced to flee that country. Let me also remind your readers — as well as answer the kind Father's question of last February — of one event which exemplifies just how "immoral" the current war in Iraq

is: Fallujah. I am sure the tender Father remembers the American triumph of Fallujah but for those of your readers who may have forgotten this episode in this "new war," this *just* war in Iraq, it was briefly this: Some American mercenaries machine-gunned a score of peaceful demonstrators in that town and, the next day, the outraged residents chanced upon four of these mercenaries and proceeded to viciously kill them, obviously forgetting the difference in the intrinsic value of American lives versus Iraqi lives. Luckily, this later event was caught on camera, to the great joy of our military leaders, who now had a perfect excuse to eliminate a substantial segment of the recalcitrant population of Baghdad. Our gallant military surrounded this town of a quarter million people; allowed the women and young children to leave, posting snipers about the periphery, doubtless with references to biblical verses on their telescopic sights, so that all men trying to escape could be executed from afar; and proceeded to level the majority of the town and kill anything that moved. We will never know just how many were murdered but a conservative estimate would put the figure in the area of 50,000. This is the tender care being exercised by our military in Iraq and Afghanistan to *rebuild* these devastated countries — nothing "immoral" there, right Father?

And please note that, subsequent to this great triumph, we have inflicted the *Fallujah Solution* on a number of other cities in Iraq. While, in Afghanistan, we have seen the flowering of the opium industry and the return of the pederasts to Kabul, which were

eliminated by the Taliban but, amazingly, now thrive under our benevolent administration. There was a telling recent story by Gareth Porter, 3/31/10, discussing an independent investigation into the abuse of children in Afghan jails. It surveyed over 600 children and found that nearly two-thirds of the young boys there were abused, i.e., tortured or sodomized. So it would seem that our American culture is making great strides in that country under our puppet Karzai. And did anyone notice that, surprisingly, the party of the CIA employee, Mr. Allawi, won the recent Iraq election and that he may be our next puppet ruler there? And let me recommend to your attention the new DOD snuff video just released on 4/6/10, through Wikileaks, of our gallant centurions gleefully machine-gunning Iraqi civilians and a couple of Reuters workers, from the safety of their helicopter, available at [colateralmurder.org](http://colateralmurder.org). And on and on it goes thanks to the bovine masses of this country, the majority of whom are always happy to murder other people, and apologists for the Empire like Fr. Brian Harrison, The Torture Priest.

I was somewhat delayed in getting to the March issue of *CW* and did not begin reading it until Holy Week. What a dramatic counterpoint this letter made to the contemplation of the torture of our Lord Jesus. One could almost see Fr. Harrison there, encouraging the Romans during the flagellation. It is really beyond my understanding why you continue to provide a platform for this poor, deranged man to spew his evil propaganda. Are we not subjected to enough of this from the mainstream media?



Quite frankly, Dr. Jones, I am very disappointed in you.

James Russell  
Oxford, Mississippi

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## SORRY

Sorry I disappointed you. Your disappointment, however, stems from a failure to distinguish between the articles I write and the letters to the editor which comment on those and other articles in *Culture Wars*. I generally agree with what I have written, but more often than not, the letters column is the place where people take issue with those and other articles and letters. I did quote Father Harrison in my article on torture, but I think I made equally clear my disagreement with his position. I did not support the war in Iraq, nor did I support the torture which followed on the heels of that invasion.

E. Michael Jones  
South Bend, Indiana

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## THE FIRST CASUALTY

Phillip Knightley wrote a book entitled: *The First Casualty: From the Crimea to Vietnam: The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist and Myth Maker* (Harcourt, NY, 1975). His introduction is based on a quote from Senator Hiram Johnson, 1917: "The first casualty when war comes is truth" Iwo Cyprian Pogonowski writes (*CW*, March 2010, p. 9): "The Nazi-German wartime death machine included a system of over 8000

camps in which were 18 million prisoners, of which 11,500,000 were killed, while other victims were executed elsewhere." Also (*CW*, Jan. 2010, p. 16): "Despite horrible losses inflicted on Poland and the tragic loss of over six million people or 20 percent of the population, Poland survived the war."

I consider these numbers wartime and peacetime propaganda exaggerations by many millions used in order to justify everything unjustifiable that the victors did. Therefore, I ask Mr. Pogonowski to present to his readers the title and author names of one or more easily available, reliable, scientific documentations written by professional academic historians with university connections proving his statements. Sixty-five years after the war there must exist such documentations if these numbers are still being distributed. Unfortunately, they are unknown to me. Any large numbers like "11,500,000" or "6,000,000" are the sum of many smaller numbers for specific camps, locations and times. This documentation must therefore also show these smaller numbers with references of their origin. All papers of all German camps are collected and archived by the International Tracing Service in Arölsen, Hessen. But these archives were closed for historical research until recently, for more than 60 years. Why??? Because they do not prove what is said and printed? Let's stop name calling and let's find out the truth.

Iwo Pogonowski (*Culture Wars*, March 2010, p. 6) claims my "basic idea is to 'blame the victims,' rather than to have the courage to

face the truth about the bestiality of the Bolsheviks and the utter inhumanity of the Nazis, both of whom greatly contributed to make the 20<sup>th</sup> century the most deadly in the history of the human race." I do not blame any victims. All historians know the status of victim can always change from one group to another. From 1919-1939 Poland was not a victim. But Poland made two million Germans into victims when they were put under Polish rule against their will and against the promise made by President Wilson's Fourteen Points of January 1918. All the details on this sad chapter can be found in the book by Richard Blanke: *The Germans in Western Poland 1918-1939* (University Press of Kentucky, 1993) [7] and Reference [10]. The same happened to 3.5 million Sudeten-Germans in Czechoslovakia [11].

Lewis Namier, a member of the British delegation denounced the Franco-Polish border proposals in Versailles as a gratuitous effort to humiliate Germany and warned that "the Germans will accept humiliation from their real conquerors but not from the Poles." The British Premier Minister Lloyd George was adamant and said: "The proposals of the Polish Frontier Commission that we should place 2.1 million Germans under the control of a people which is of a different religion and which has never proved its capacity for stable self-government throughout its history must, in my judgement, lead sooner or later to a new war in the east of Europe" [7, p. 18-19]. President Wilson expressed a belated realization that "the only interest of France in Poland is in



weakening Germany by giving Poland territory to which she has no right" [7, p. 19]. Thus, WWII was already pretty well pre-programmed according to the key politicians of that time.

The "inhumanity of the Nazis" is treated somewhere in the American media basically every day in every section, so there is no need to discuss or repeat it here. Example: The AP article on Easter Sunday (!!!), April 4, 2010, of all days, in *The Sunday Gazette* entitled "Creators of Curious George carried art while fleeing Nazis." So, you are an artist and, of course, you have to flee the evil "Nazis", which means for most readers, of course, the evil Germans. Nothing critical of "inhumanity" of Poles, Soviets, Czechs or other "victors of WWII" is ever published. Most Americans have never heard or read anything about the greatest "Ethnic Cleansing" operation in European and World history that occurred in 1945-1950 affecting about 15 million people, of which many were also killed. The main beneficiaries of these events were the Polish people and the Czechs. Who knows or has ever read anything about the Benesch Decrees?

The "bestiality of the Bolsheviks" is almost unknown in America, because they were the good allies. (Remember Stalin's surname: "Uncle Joe"). Polish propagandists have been very successful to tell the world that they have always been "victims". But Poland and Czechoslovakia used the opportunities given them by the victorious Allies in 1945 to make 8-10 million East-Germans and 3.5 million Sudeten-Germans victims of Polish/Czech inhumanity and crimi-

nality on a large scale as not seen in human history before, especially in peace time, by expelling them from their lands between the Oder/Neisse and Memel rivers. These expelled Germans and their ancestors lived there for 700 years, and developed these lands. This happened even centuries before America was discovered. The Poles and Czechs cannot put guilt on Stalin, because Stalin and his Russians did not move into the homes of expelled Germans in Breslau, Stettin or Danzig and hundreds of other German cities and villages.

But Stalin committed the same crime in half of East Prussia, and Benesch did it with 3.5 million Sudeten-Germans. These ethnic cleansing crimes, in peacetime (!), on people who lived with their ancestors in these East German Lands (now "West Poland") are, of course, in America and the world basically unknown due to the successful efforts of Polish propagandists and the broken spines of the Germans after the most intense 100 year lasting Anti-German propaganda campaigns which never stop (see *Culture Wars*, Jan.-March 2010). Poland and Czechoslovakia tried to eliminate and erase this 700-year history of East-Germany from the memory of mankind in order to "eliminate" any need for guilt feelings; if there are any, at least for people with a conscience. Now, Germany cannot get back these lands, but nobody can expect or request that the Germans forget this loss and how it was done, especially if real and exaggerated German crimes are mentioned somewhere in the media basically every day. The "Anti-Germans" never miss an opportunity to mention

German Crimes in the mass media. Why should one not be permitted to answer by mentioning "Anti-German" crimes?

One should not say now Poland needed compensation for East-Poland (=West Ukraine and West-Belarus) conquered by Pilsudski 1920, (Treaty of Riga, March 18, 1921) and re-annexed 1939 by Stalin to the Soviet Union. The Poles there were a minority and they were not expelled by Stalin, but could leave to Poland if they wanted. If the Polish or Czech governments were really interested in true reconciliation and peaceful coexistence they could say: "OK, we realize that in 1945 we went too far, but we are interested in true reconciliation. As a sign of that we give back one city, for example West-Stettin or Karlsbad." The Berlin Government could say: "All Poles and Czechs living now in that city can, of course, stay. Nobody will be expelled. After all we have now a united Europe." Nothing like that will, of course, ever happen. But why not dream about a better world that could, at least theoretically exist?

The always "peaceful" Poles and Czechs like to talk about Slavic solidarity with their equally "peaceful" Slavic Russian brothers. A look on any globe shows clearly that no race, if one would like to talk about a race in this case, has conquered more "Lebensraum" than the Slavs. It reaches today from Bohemia and the Oder/Neisse rivers to Vladivostok and Kolyma. Questions: Was the Slavic "Drang nach Westen" planned already at the Pan-Slavic Congress of Prague in 1848 really necessary? Decades before Hitler



was born? This question is also addressed to all other Allies of WWII who wanted to inflict permanent damage to Germany. Have Americans ever heard about Kolyma?

Pogonowski asks: "Why is Mueller so friendly to the Soviets. . .?" He is not. But before this subject can be discussed reasonably well the readers should really have studied the books of the Russian historian Victor Suvorov who is basically unknown in America, because he is not "politically correct." His ground-breaking book *The Icebreaker — Who Started the Second World War?* was published already in 1990 in London by Hamish-Hamilton and in 1988 in Paris. It took almost 20 years for one of his important books to be published in USA. Now we have one: Victor Suvorov, *The Chief Culprit — Stalin's Grand Design to Start World War II* (Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD 21402, 2008). The Anti-Germans will not like this book. If Suvorov's thesis is correct, the whole history of WWII has to be rewritten, including the list of "victims."

Here is a quote from page 108 of Suvorov's book: "If Stalin had wanted peace, in August 1939 he had many opportunities to avert war. One of them was to follow the example of Britain and France and give guarantee of safety to Poland. Or he could simply have drawn out his talks with Britain and France, which would have served as a warning to Hitler: 'Invade Poland, but keep in mind that all of Europe is against you, we are gathered here in Moscow talking about something, and all we have to do is blockade Germany.' But Stalin choose his own way."

Why did Stalin choose his own way? As predicted by Lenin he wanted back what Russia lost in the Treaty of Riga of March 18, 1921. In addition he wanted a war to start between Germany and England/France. According to Suvorov he planned to attack Europe in July of 1941. But Hitler destroyed that plan on June 22, 1941. Stalin's strongest army was located opposite to the Rumanian oil fields. If he would have succeeded to get them, the Red Army's drive to the Atlantic could not have been stopped. Stalin at least could with help from the Poles (ICP, CW, Jan. 2010!) conquer Berlin in 1945 after tremendous losses.

Pogonowski writes (p. 6): "Why the amazingly disproportional exaggeration of the faults of the Poles in the 20<sup>th</sup> century?" Why is it an "amazingly disproportional exaggeration" to mention the conquest of so-called "East-Poland (= West Ukraina, West-Belarus, parts of Lithuania) in 1920 with the Treaty of Riga moving Poland's border 200-300 km to the east? This was, of course, one of the main reasons for the Stalin-Hitler pact of 1939 that led to WWII. Lenin said in March 1921: "We will get this land back sometime." It is pure megalomania ("Grössenwahn") if the Poles assumed that a nation of 20 million can attack the Soviet Union with 150 million people and believe this can lead to a stable peaceful political arrangement for the future. Of course, this Riga Treaty ending a Polish war of aggression is never mentioned by Polish and other "politically correct" historians for whom Hitler and the Germans are the only guilty ones.

The real story of the "alleged Polish atrocities against Germans living in Poland . . . either fictional or based on extreme exaggeration of very minor incidents" is discussed in the Book by Hugo Rasmus: *Pomerellen — Westpreussen 1919-1939* (Herbig, 1986), [2]. It is not a nice story.

Pogonowski writes (p. 6) "The author is correct that great cruelties were perpetrated against Germans living in Poland in 1945." This one sentence shows very clearly why this letter exchange is necessary. The one single word "Poland" in this sentence demonstrates, beyond any doubt, the attempt by Polish patriots and super-nationalists to erase from the memory of mankind 700 years of East-German history. The word "Poland" in that sentence must be replaced, of course, by "Germany." In the year 1945 Silesia, East-Brandenburg, Pomerania, the Danzig Area, East Prussia, Memelland, were part of Germany like Bavaria with German populations and can not be called "Poland." The above mentioned sentence must be rejected because it is historically incorrect, to say it mildly. In his January article Pogonowski writes: "Now Poland . . . has the same borders which it had already one thousand years ago." With this he wants to justify the greatest "Ethnic Cleansing" operation in Europe. But a thousand years ago state borders in the modern sense simply did not exist. Most of the land was still primeval forests or jungles. Even today East Europe has a low population density compared with Western Europe. Thus, this argument is not valid to justify the unjustifiable.



I am accused of making "so much efforts to grasp at straws, looking into remote corners to find any possible way to find faults with the Poles." Pogonowski is a real master in doing exactly this with regard to German crimes and faults in basically all his articles, for example read "Bad Money" in *CW*, Feb. 2010, where he writes: "In 1938 . . . 85 percent of the German population was enthusiastic about Hitler." As a historian Pogonowski knows very well that if a dictatorship is finally entrenched as it was in Germany in 1938, internal revolt is almost impossible. But his conclusion is: 85 percent of all Germans are "guilty," whereas Poles are never "guilty" of anything. After the Reformation there was no "presence of Polish-Catholic culture . . . in Prussia." German Catholics were driven from their homes and villages in East-Germany just as all other Germans after 1945. They certainly did not benefit from any "Polish-Catholic culture." In this matter of the Polish "*Drang nach Westen*" Polish Communists and Polish Catholics were and still are "one heart and one soul." I have never heard or read that a Polish Catholic Clergyman has spoken out against the West-expansion of Poland. Here one should also mention the sad history of Cardinal Hlond.

Pogonowski writes about "deliberate genocidal attempts to eliminate entire ethnic groups." The historical fact is that there was no "deliberate genocidal attempt to eliminate the Polish people as proven by more than 40 million Poles living today in good health and spirit. In 1939 there were only about 24 million Poles. It certainly

helps to win wars. Which other European nation had a similar population increase since the war without any forced immigration by foreigners? It is also an undeniable fact that an entire ethnic group of about 8-10 million human beings has been eliminated between the Oder/Neisse and Memel rivers after 1945. In Sudetenland (then part of Czechoslovakia) there were 3.5 million additional German people eliminated. More in Hungary and Yugoslavia. These facts are, as mentioned before, basically totally unknown in America. This is one reason why they have to be mentioned here.

Pogonowski claims (*CW*, Jan. 2010, p.16) "the tragic loss of over six million people or 20% of the population" of Poland. Up to June 7, 1943, the German Wehrmacht (army) had dug up the remains of 4143 Polish officers killed by the NKVD at the order of Stalin in Katyn near Smolensk. As far as possible they were also identified. Several books are available on the sad and tragic fate of these Poles. The listing of their names is available as far as possible [8]. If it now would be true that "six million people" have been killed during WWII in Poland there would have to exist  $6,000,000 / 4,000 = 1500$  mass graves in the order of magnitude of those in Katyn, with about 4000 corpses each. Or 3000 mass graves with 2000 dead people each. The historical fact now is that during the past 65 years not a single one of these thousands of mass cemeteries has been found and investigated. If only one or two would have been found, the front pages of all the big newspapers of the Western world would have

been filled with terrible articles with even more terrible pictures for weeks. This argument alone independent of population statistics should raise serious doubts about the truthfulness of the six million figure. On the other hand, crematoria which could cremate 6,000,000 corpses simply did not exist and were never shown to exist.

Pogonowski writes on page 16 (Jan.2010): "Poles remember that during the Soviet invasion of Poland in 1920, Lenin attempted to overrun Poland and form a Moscow-Berlin axis, in order to start a world wide communist revolution". And: "General Mikhail Tukhachevsky gave the historic order to the Red Army on July 4, 1920: 'To the West, over the corpse of 'White Poland', on the road to the worldwide conflagration'."

What proves and what evidence exists that Stalin had not the same goal during the spring of the fateful year 1941? This author still remembers well the terrible news on Sunday morning of June 22, 1941 that Hitler invaded the Soviet Union. Our neighbor told my father on that fateful Sunday that now the war and everything is lost. Why are the books of Victor Suvorov such as *The Icebreaker* printed in England and Europe, practically unknown in America? He proves convincingly that Stalin had planned to attack the West two weeks later, in July 1941. Hitlers early victories were possible only because according to Suvorov the Red Army had nothing prepared for a defense but only for an attack. The strongest forces of the Red Army were positioned close to the Rumanian oils fields near Ploesti. With their loss the way to the Atlantic would have



been open for Stalin and his Red Army. Another reason for Hitler's early victories was, of course, that many Red Army Soldiers simply did not want to fight for Stalin and surrendered. This changed after America's entrée into the war in December 1941.

Pogonowski writes (p. 14, *CW*, January 2010): "Hitler ordered . . . to complete the carefully planned destruction of Warsaw." He says not one word about the saturation bombing of about one hundred German cities by Poland's good friends in the West during four years so that Poland could "win the war" and move its borders to the West, to the Oder/Neisse rivers. This is another historical fact mostly unknown in America. Now, if a city is destroyed by saturation bombing, the surviving inhabitants can rebuild it in a few years and it is still their city. But the victors of WWII invented something else in violation of all international laws which is for a defeated country much more dangerous in the long run than saturation bombing. On January 4, 1943, anthropology professor at Harvard, Earnest Hooton, wrote an article in the paper *PM* with the title "Should we kill the Germans?" Oh no, he did not want to do that. But he proposed to make Germany, already one of the most densely populated countries, an immigration country for the people of the whole world. This was done by the victors ruling Germany for 65 years. Result: Berlin is now also the second largest Turkish city and in many other German cities the German children in elementary schools are already in the minority. Soon, the Germans living in Frankfurt and other cities

are also in the minority. A city partly occupied by aliens is for ever lost to the Germans just like Königsberg. German Catholic Bishops are more concerned about establishing Moslem religious education in German schools than in the promotion of the Catechism or the Compendium to their Catholics. About 2000 Mosques have already been built in Germany, none in Poland. About 15 million foreigners have already been settled in Germany. The Islamization of Germany is in full swing. Any German who would dare to criticize these policies will be vilified immediately. Of course, Planned Parenthood is under the Name "Pro Familia" also very active in Germany. I guess *CW* readers know what is the business of Planned Parenthood.

In the April 2010 issue of *Culture Wars* Mr. Pogonowski published in his never ending search for German crimes and misdeeds a long article entitled "Lenin's Mummy." Unfortunately he does not mention two very important events happening at about the same time: First, the Recreation and Reestablishment of the Polish State by Germany and Austria on November 5, 1916. Second, the fact that on December 12, 1916, the German Emperor "in complete harmony with our allies, decided to propose to the hostile powers to enter peace negotiations" (*New York Times*, December 13, 1916). Of course these peace proposals were rejected by England and France, because President Wilson promised them secretly before his reelection in November 1916, that the USA will come to help them. On the other hand the booty and the loot that the Allies wanted was just too great. If the peace would have been reestab-

lished in 1916, Lenin could have stayed in Switzerland and enjoyed the life of a pensioner in the beautiful landscape of that country.

Pogonowski writes (p. 11): "The treaty of Brest Litovsk was a humiliating capitulation. . . . The Bolshevik government of Russia surrendered to Germany and Austria 150,000 sq. km of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia." What does Pogonowski actually want? Does he agree that these countries should be independent nations or should they be just Russian provinces?

According to the policies of the Western Powers, Eastern Europe has been given up to the Elbe river to Stalin. When the Wehrmacht retreated from the east in 1944/1945 hundreds of thousands of people who were "citizens" of the Soviet Union moved with the German armies to the West. What happened to these people, to prisoners of war and "Ostarbeiter"? Most Americans have certainly never heard of *Operation Keelhaul — The Story of Forced Repatriation* by Julius Epstein. (Devin-Adair, 1973). Nothing can describe the tragedy of Eastern Europe at that time better than the following story (p. 80): "A British soldier reported that a little girl came to him with a note, saying: 'Kill us, but don't surrender us to the Bolsheviks'. With difficulty, the soldier deciphered the note, put it in his pocket and began to cry."

Orward Mueller  
LTEMueller@aol.com

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## SAME WRITER?

As a recent subscriber to *Culture Wars* I await eagerly each new edition. Sometimes, I go to the web site to see if there is anything of interest. The latest highlighted article from the Archives, The Kidnapping of Sister Mary Cecelia, caught my eye. While I only gave it a passing attention at the time now it stirred my interest. Maybe I'd learn something. At the same time I thought, "Why bring this up after all these years?"

What did I learn? Well, a lot about the kidnapping — I know many of the main characters — and something about the author. He obviously wasn't the same writer in '89 as the one who penned *The Jewish Revolutionary Spirit*. The one of whom reviewers said "his research and analysis is comprehensive and calm".

I found unsubstantiated allegations, unproven assertions, straw man arguments, non sequiturs, a gullible and unquestioning acceptance of Mrs. Greve's version of events and statements. I'll get deeper into these if our correspondence continues. For now I'll just say on reading this if anyone comes across as paranoid it is Mrs. Greve.

As to your likening traditionalists to Donatists I find your comparison without merit and wonder how a Ph.D. could make it. One of the earliest things Catholics learn about the Sacraments is that virtually anyone can administer Baptism. No one ever questions the virtue of the administrator. Neither do any traditional priests that I know of. When they hear stories that a priest (Novus Ordo) spilled the water in the font rather than "get the child's garment wet", or "I baptize the in the names of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit" or "the name of the Father, Son and the Apostles Peter and Paul." Or some other such change and no one can remember exactly what then they "conditionally" Baptize. Another question of change in the "form" is the consecration of the wine. One that no one to my knowledge has successfully defended.

Michael Davies, who you quote favorably, tells us in "Pope Paul's New Mass"; "St. Thomas, The Council of Florence and the Cat-

echism of the Council of Trent" all teach that the full consecration formula is the correct "form" (p. 626). Then he goes on to say that since they were (may have been?) wrong on another point then he will accept the interpretation of a Msgr. Joseph Pohle. I guess anytime we find these three in agreement we can put it aside. What can we expect from someone who writes a 673-page opus on what's wrong with the New Mass but concludes, "it's OK if it's done right."

What if someone wrote a 1,100 page book on Jewish Revolutionaries and then said; "but they're Okay, and we'll meet them all in Heaven."?

Your belittling of traditional Catholics with the contempt shown by "the hundred or so" etc. is not only off the mark in numbers but irrelevant. How many people were on the Ark? When Our Lord asks if He will find Faith when he returns isn't He implying there won't be many.

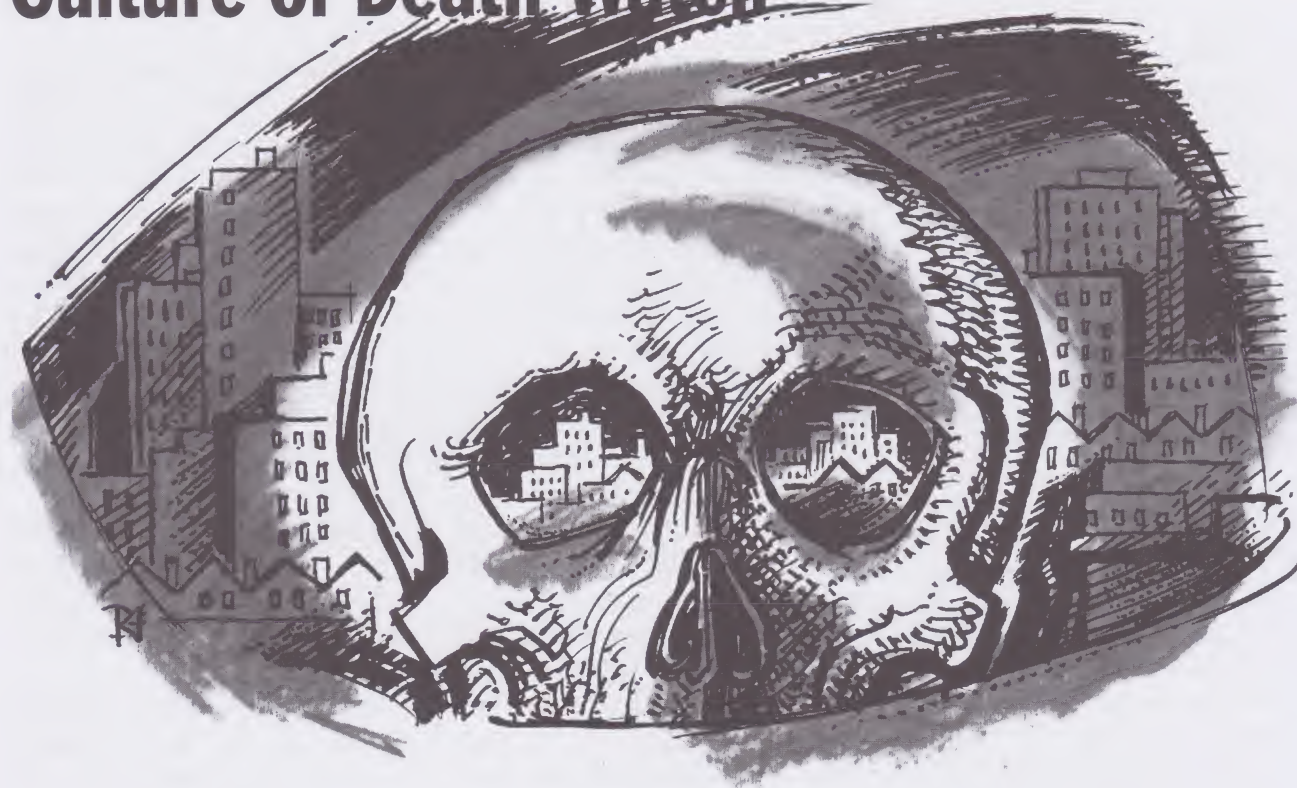
As to being in communion with the 900,000 in the Novus Ordo there is no such number. Fully 80-85 percent of them no longer attend Mass and any poll taken shows that 45 percent don't believe this and 72 percent don't believe that etc. etc. etc. Whereas in almost any traditional group you'll find they believe as the Act of Faith says "in all the truths taught by the Catholic Church".

Hoping to hear from you. If so I hope too you will address the question of the possibility of a heretical Pope.

Name  
Withheld



# Culture of Death Watch



## Rabbinical Despotism

I was well acquainted with the rabbinical despotism which by the power of superstition has established its throne for many centuries in Poland, and which for its own security sought in every possible way to prevent the spread of light and truth. I knew how closely the Jewish theocracy is connected with the national existence, so that the abolition of the former must inevitably bring with it the annihilation of the latter.

Solomon Maimon,  
*The Autobiography of Solomon Maimon*, p. 135.

The Coen brothers' latest film, *A Serious Man*, is set in Minneapolis in 1967, but it begins with a prologue in Yiddish, set in some *shtetl* in the Pale of the Settlement, which is to say in the part of Poland which Russia confiscated during the last decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The exact date of the prologue is irrelevant because from the time that the Baal Shem Tov created Hasidism in the wake of the Shabbetai Zevi catastrophe and the Chmielnicki pogroms until the first writings of Moses Mendelssohn began to trickle into what Maimon referred to as "dark-

est Lithuania," time stood still in the pale. Tevye lived his life in a world which Scholem Aleichem romanticized and which Solomon Maimon damned as the epitome of superstition, but it was a world which never changed, hence the lack of time cues in a movie otherwise obsessed with them.

*A Serious Man* is the Coen brothers' most autobiographical film to date from Hollywood's most successful siblings. Beginning with their collaboration with Sam Raimi's horror flick *The Undead* in the '80s, the Coen brothers have

gone on to produce an *oeuvre* that is both commercially successful and generically diverse. Joel (born November 29, 1954) and Ethan (born September 21, 1957) Coen grew up in St. Louis Park, Minnesota, a suburb of Minneapolis/St. Paul. Both parents were professors. Edward Coen taught economics at the University of Minnesota and Rena Coen was an art historian at St. Cloud State University. Joel and Ethan, destined to be prodigies by both nature and nurture, amused themselves as children by making home movies on their Super 8 movie camera.

The Coens referred to *A Serious Man* as "a film . . . reminiscent of our childhoods." The synagogue where *A Serious Man* was filmed "was close to where we grew up . . . Marshak was a rabbi that we



knew as kids. He was a sage. He said nothing but he had a lot of charisma." The kernel of the story was "the kid's stoned bar mitzvah," which was based on "characters that we knew." Given what they wanted to do, one of the first hurdles the Coens had to clear was "getting the Jewish community to cooperate." Once word of the stoned bar mitzvah got out, the people at the synagogue were worried.

"You not going to make fun of the Jews, are you?" one of the Coen brothers mimics, and then both brothers burst out laughing, as if the question were the punch line for a private joke. The big question about *A Serious Man* is: "Is it good for the Jews?" The question elicits more laughter from the Coens. Then, as if some explanation is necessary, one of the Coens adds, "It's not that we're laughing at anybody." And that statement elicits still more laughter. Then, finally calming down, one of them adds with a straight face, "The congregants were very excited to be a part of the film."

To say that critics have been perplexed by the film is an understatement. One reviewer described it as "gentle but dark." The Jewish reviewer for the *New York Post* seemed more conflicted than most. This is not surprising since *A Serious Man* is certainly the most anti-Jewish film Hollywood has ever produced. It makes *Jued Suess* look like *Fiddler on the Roof* by comparison. The Jewish thought police raked Steven Spielberg over the coals for directing *Munich*, but *Munich* comes across as an Israeli propaganda film in comparison to the Coens' *Serious Man*.

The film makes a number of statements, all of them anti-Jewish:

1) the Jewish religion is a false religion which can offer not only no consolation for suffering, but no explanation for the most important events in a man's life, in particular, the presence of evil.

2) all rabbis are clueless, fatuous fools

3) all Jews are repulsive. The film goes out of its way to make Jews—from Larry's brother Arthur, who spends the entire film draining his sebaceous cyst, to Larry's family, which engages in high-decibel soup slurping with a Menorah in the background—seem as physically unattractive as possible.

4) a catastrophe is looming on the horizon.

*A Serious Man* is, beyond all that, a tale of rabbicide. If you read the trailing credits long enough, you will learn that "no Jew was killed in the making of this film." That's because, in this story, the rabbis discredit themselves so much that the killing remains a mere formality. But the question raised during the Yiddish prologue remains: If we kill the rabbi, will we be cursed? Or as

Larry Gopnik, the protagonist of *A Serious Man*. In a supplement to the DVD, the Coen brothers explained that they were looking for a suitable Yiddish tale to begin their movie. Unable to find one, they decided to make one up. The Yiddish prologue to *A Serious Man* is, as a result, both personal and archetypal. A Jew enters the hovel where he lives with his wife and tells her that a wheel fell off his cart on way home. Fortunately, even though the hour was late and the road deserted, a famous rabbi happened by and helped him. Full of gratitude, the Jew invited the rabbi to his house for a bowl of soup.

Expecting a sympathetic response from his wife, the Jew is shocked when she tells him that the rabbi in question died three years earlier and that he has been talking to a *dybbuk*—in Jewish folklore, the wandering soul of a dead person who has taken up residence in the body of a living person. In the middle of their heated discussion, both husband and wife freeze when they hear a knock at the door. The

***A Serious Man* is certainly the most anti-Jewish film Hollywood has ever produced.**

Maimon puts it: Will the abolition of the despotic Jewish theocracy mean the annihilation of the Jewish nation? Or will it mean its liberation? Or have the Jews been cursed since they killed another rabbi and cried out in unison, "His blood be on us and on our children!"

These are questions more suitable for the Coen brothers than

rabbi in question enters and sits down by the fire, only to have the wife confront him. When words fail to get the rabbi to confess his true identity, the wife stabs him with an ice pick. The rabbi laughs after being stabbed as if to prove the wife right. He is a *dybbuk*. But then, blood begins to discolor his shirt where the ice pick has been





The Coen brothers

rammed into his chest, and he asks, "Is this the way you repay kindness?"

Is the rabbi a kindly old man who deserves not only hospitality but respect and gratitude? Or is it a dybbuk, which is to say, an evil spirit, sent to oppress them? The Coen brothers made up the story, but Solomon Maimon, refugee from the *shtetl* and the devotee of the Enlightenment, articulated the terms of engagement two centuries earlier when he wondered if rabbinic despotism was the only thing which kept the Jewish race together. If so, the Coen brothers have a dilemma on their hands. If the rabbi is a tyrant, he deserves to be killed, but if the Jew's wife kills the rabbi, then his entire family will be cursed. This is clearly the Jewish version of a no-win situation. The wife never wavers in her belief that she has dispatched a dybbuk, but the husband is wracked with doubt. "We're

cursed," he says when the rabbi gets up to leave and walks off into the blizzard raging outside their hovel.

Cut to a suburb of Minneapolis during the summer of 1967. The narrative now bounces back and forth between Larry Gopnik, a physics professor at what looks like the local branch of the state university, and Danny, his 12-year-old son. Larry is at his doctor's office undergoing what looks like a routine physical exam, and Danny is studying Hebrew and about to be bar mitzvahed in two weeks. Before long, it's pretty clear that Danny, along with everyone else in his class, hates Hebrew school. In order to overcome the boredom associated with talmudic study, Danny listens to Jefferson Airplane and smokes dope. This aversion to the Talmud is nothing new. Solomon Maimon hated Hebrew school too, characterizing "the subjects of the Talmud" as "dry and

mostly unintelligible to a child." The shul wasn't much better than its curriculum. Jewish children from the pale were "imprisoned from morning till night" in "a small smoky hut," where "the children are scattered, some on benches, some on the bare earth" (p. 31). Then as now, when "children are doomed in the bloom of youth to such an infernal school, it may be easily imagined with what joy and rapture they look forward to their release" (p. 33).

According to Heinrich Graetz, the father of Jewish historiography, the net result of immersion in Talmudic studies was the moral corruption of the Jews who studied it:

A love of twisting, distorting, ingenious quibbling, and a foregone antipathy to what did not lie within their field of vision, constituted the character of the Polish Jews. Pride in their knowledge of the Talmud and a spirit of dogmatism attached even to the best rabbis, and undermined their moral sense. The Polish Jews of course were extraordinarily pious but even their piety rested on sophistry and boastfulness. . . . The vulgar acquired the quibbling method of the schools and employed it to outwit the less cunning. They found pleasure and a sort of triumphant delight in deception and cheating (p. 5-6).

Between the beginning of the film and the bar mitzvah, Danny whiles away his time in Hebrew class listening to Jefferson Airplane through the earplug of his transistor radio and trying to pass a \$20 bill to classmate Fagel for the marijuana he has bought from him.



Sensing something amiss, the rabbi pulls out Danny's earplug, the room is filled with "Somebody to Love," and the class explodes into the music-driven anarchy of the '60s. The students at the local Hebrew school have made a discovery: when the truth is found to be lies. . . all the joy within you dies." When the intellectual props have been kicked out from underneath the rabbinic enterprise, all that's left is recourse to sensual pleasure—sex, drugs, and rock n' roll.

Danny's father, Larry Gopnik, discovers the same thing in a much more painful fashion. Larry Gopnik is a Jewish physics professor, but he is also a modern-day Job in a world which has replaced suffering with banality. Gopnik teaches at an unnamed university in the Midwest and—awaiting the results of a medical examination, as well as the decision over whether

ing a *get*, which is to say the Talmudic ratification of divorce so that she can remain an upstanding member of the local Jewish community. In order to spare their two obnoxious children any psychic conflict, the wife demands that both Gopnik and his brother, who spends most of the movie in the Gopniks' one bathroom draining a sebaceous cyst, will have to move out of the Gopnik house into the Jolly Roger motel. Gopnik, the quintessential schlemiel, is dumbfounded, and, when he tries to get his bearings, his wife tells him to see their rabbi. "I have begged you to see the rabbi," says Larry's wife, and this becomes the theological refrain which runs throughout the entire movie.

Like Job, Larry Gopnik goes from one counselor to another, and they all tell him the same thing. Watching his awkward and physi-

same problems." Virtually every encounter in the film ends with the same bit of advice: "Talk to the rabbi," she tells Larry.

That admonition sets up the plot framework for what is a deeply theological film, whose plot revolves around Gopnik's visit to three different rabbis. Larry Gopnik is Job, but he is living at a time when the Jewish religion under whose dispensation the Book of Job was written, is dead and obsolete. The rabbis who represent this religion, as a result, are incapable of explaining anything. Hoping to meet with the senior rabbi, Gopnik encounters instead his junior colleague, Rabbi Scott, who upbraids Larry for lacking "capacity for wonder" and the "right perspective." Jumping up from behind his desk, Rabbi Scott goes to the window of his study and, pulling back the curtain, gives Larry the key to understanding all of his problems: "Look at the parking lot, Larry!" Larry's problem, according to Rabbi Scott, stems from the fact that "You're looking at your wife with old eyes." When Larry informs that rabbi that his problem is that his wife is sleeping with Sy Abelman, the rabbi is at a loss for words. "Oh, sorry," he blurts out. Instead of supporting Larry as a victim of adultery, the rabbi tacitly condones it by showing himself willing to help the wife get her *get*. After collaborating in the destruction of Larry's marriage, the rabbi gets back to the vision thing by telling him, "This is life. This is an expression of God's will. Things aren't so bad. Look at the parking lot, Larry."

The encounter with the second rabbi is, if anything, more intellec-

**The Coens referred to *A Serious Man* as "a film . . . reminiscent of our childhoods."**

he gets tenure, and his son's bar mitzvah—his world suddenly falls apart. When Gopnik arrives home in his Dodge Coronet to a meticulously barren recreation of a '60s suburb, things start to go seriously wrong. His wife announces that she has been having an affair with Gopnik's colleague, the much older Sy Abelman, and that she now wants a divorce. As if this weren't bad enough, she adds religious insult to marital injury by demand-

cally repulsive older brother flounder around in one of Minnesota's many lakes, Larry listens to a Jewish woman wearing leg braces explain that "it's not always easy to decipher what Ha Shem [i.e., God] is telling us." No one, it would seem, should be better prepared to deal with adversity than the Jews. "We're Jews," the crippled lady tells Larry, "we have thousands of years of tradition to draw on—all the stories of people who have had the





tually frustrating and more spiritually bankrupt than the first encounter. Rabbi Nachner, the man with the "life experience" Rabbi Scott lacked, listens patiently, dunking a tea bag, as Larry explains his feeling that "the carpet has been yanked out from under me." Since his meeting with the junior rabbi, Sy Abelman has died in a car accident and Larry has had a less serious accident of his own, but now everyone is expecting Larry to pay for the funeral of the man that cuckolded him. Somehow this doesn't seem fair.

"Somebody has to pay for Sy's funeral, but why is it me? I'm so strapped for money now. I don't know. What does it all mean? Paying for Sy's funeral? He died the same instant I had the crash. Does that mean that I am Sy Abelman.

when deciphered, said "Help me! Save me!"

"This in a goy's mouth, Larry!"

Needless to say, Sussman was stunned: "Sussman can't eat. Sussman can't sleep. He examines the mouths of his patients, Jew and goy alike" and wants to know what this could mean. Sussman, who is an educated man ("Not like Rabbi Marshak but an educated man. He knows about the Zohar") asks the rabbi if the answer lies in Kaballah. Sussman knows that every Hebrew letter has a numerical equivalent. Transposing the Hebrew letters to numbers, he comes up with the telephone number of the Red Owl Supermarket in Bloomington, Minnesota. He calls the number and asks the manager if he knows a goy with Hebrew writing on his teeth. Getting no satisfactory an-

Does it mean that we are all one? How does God speak to us?"

R a b b i Nachner responds by telling Larry the story of the goy's teeth. A dentist in the rabbi's congregation by the name of S u s s m a n , while making an appliance for one of his goy patients, noticed Hebrew writing on the inside of the goy's lower incisors, writing which

swer he goes to the Red Owl Supermarket, but finds nothing. Returning to Rabbi Nachner, Sussman asks, "What does it mean? Is the answer in Kaballah or Torah? What can such a sign mean?"

Intrigued by the story, Larry asks, "What did you tell him?"

"Teeth?" answers Rabbi Nachner. "Don't know. God? Don't know. Helping others? Can't hurt."

To which Larry responds: "It sounds like you don't know anything."

The story ends with a picture of Sussman playing golf and Nachner adding, "He stopped asking. He returned to life." The moral of the story, according to Rabbi Nachner, is that "questions are like a tooth ache," but Larry isn't satisfied with this response. "I want an answer," he objects, but according to the rabbi, "Ha Shem doesn't owe you an answer." And even if Ha Shem had the answer, the rabbi continues, "He hasn't told me." Subdued by the thought that nothing has any meaning, Larry asks one more question:

"What happened to the goy?"

"The goy?" Nachner answers. "Who cares?"

Solomon Maimon's autobiography caused a sensation when it appeared in Berlin at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Like the Coen brothers, Maimon felt that Judaism was a false religion and that the rabbis were the enemy of the Jewish people. The Kaballah, as Nachner's exposition of the goy's teeth made clear, could be used to justify anything, including the claim that nothing had any justification: "The remotest analogies between signs and things were seized, till at



last the Kaballah degenerated into an art of madness according to method, or a systematic science resting on fancy."

Brother Nathanael Kapner, who was born in 1950 and is four years older than Joel Coen, felt the same way about the Jewish religion he was raised in. Like Danny Gopnik in *A Serious Man*, Kapner went to Hebrew school. Unlike Danny he didn't get stoned or listen to Jefferson Airplane. Kapner was a pious Jewish boy, something which makes the epiphany he had in a Pittsburgh synagogue, all the more startling:

I recall my parents taking me to my cousin's Bar Mitzvah at a farther part of the City of Pittsburgh, where I grew up. We entered into an old, musty smelling synagogue which had the Jewish Star of David everywhere. After only 10 minutes of being inside, I got very nauseated and wanted to vomit. The synagogue seemed to have a deathly pall about it. And I couldn't bear looking at the Jewish Star everywhere. I learned later that the Star of David is an occult symbol that was popularized by the Kabbalists of the 13th Century in Europe. It was then at the age of 8, through my experience in that old, musty smelling synagogue, that I knew that Judaism was a religion of death.

Kapner was exposed to Christianity as a child, but the rabbis kept him from acting on what he saw:

The neighborhood where I grew up was made up of Jews, Catholics, and Protestants. Every year at Christmas time in the 1950s, all of our Gentile neighbors put the Na-

tivity Scene on their lawns. I simply loved looking at the Nativity Scene! And I wanted to know more about Jesus Christ. But we were forbidden to even mention Jesus Christ's name unless we used it as a curse word.

A boyhood friend of mine named Ricky Rago was a Roman Catholic. One afternoon after playing baseball, Ricky Rago invited me over to his house and we went into his bedroom to play Monopoly.

All over his walls were pictures of the 14 Stations Of The Cross. I was 10 years old at the time and these pictures of Christ's sufferings made a deep impression on me. I promised myself that one day I would learn the meaning of these sufferings of Jesus Christ.

Christianity was made up by a manic-depressant by the name of Saul of Tarsus who wanted to blame the crucifixion of a criminal named Jesus Christ on the Jewish people. And Saul of Tarsus you should know was a "self-hating" Jew. He hated being a Jew so much that he even changed his name to "Paul!"

Now it happened dear children that 500 years after Jesus Christ was crucified, the Roman Catholic Church took the crazed writings of Saul of Tarsus and made a religion out of it. They called this religion, "Christianity." Thus we are not going to bother studying this false and hate-mongering religion."

Kapner's father, unsurprisingly, only reiterated what Kapner had learned in the synagogue:

When I got home I asked my fa-

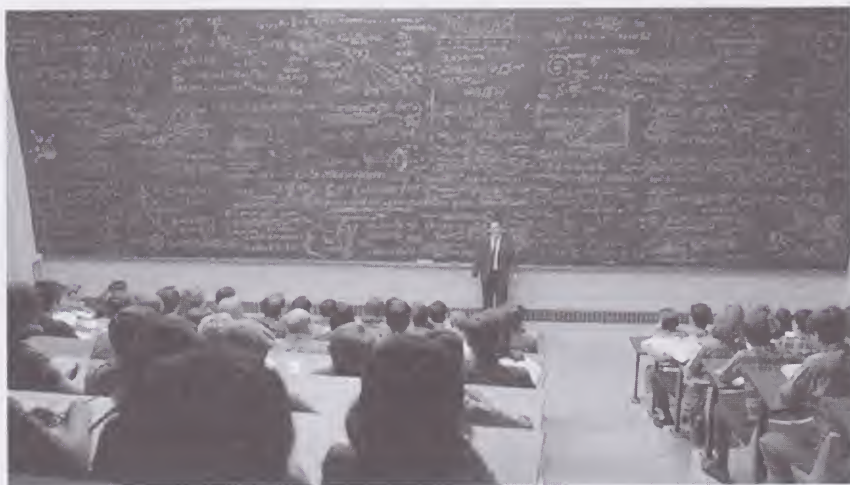
## **"I knew that Judaism was a religion of death."**

Hebrew school, in Kapner's experience, wasn't so much an introduction to the Torah, as it was an inoculation against Christianity. As part of his Hebrew school curriculum, Kapner was required to take a course in Comparative Religion, in which he and his classmates studied Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. After that build up, Kapner was shocked to hear his teacher announce that they were not going to study Christianity. "You see children," Mrs. Schechter, his teacher said,

ther what he thought about Saul of Tarsus. My father answered, "Saul of Tarsus tried to convince Jews to become Christians. But we are born Jews and we should die as Jews."

Solomon Maimon noticed something similar in the attitude of the rabbis of his day: "As I observed in most of the rabbis a good deal of pride, quarrelsomeness and other evil qualities, they became objects of dislike to me on that account" (p. 81). Confronted with what





seemed like an insuperable conflict between faith and reason, Maimon vowed to leave Poland, along with his wife and family, and move to Berlin, where he could “destroy by enlightenment the remnant of superstition which still clung to me.” This decision set Maimon permanently at odds with the Jewish people, rendering him by and large unemployable as a tutor “because the parents of these young people were anxious lest their children should be led astray and by independent thinking on religion, be made to waver in their faith. . . . They could not rely up on their children having sufficient judgment to be able to enter upon this course without passing from one extreme to the other, from superstition to unbelief, and perhaps they were right.”

Maimon’s behavior didn’t help matters any. Like the Coen brothers, he went out of his way to outrage Jewish sensibilities. While in Posen, Maimon deliberately touched what the Jews felt was a sacred stag horn at entrance to the synagogue: “Horror-struck they expected my death on the spot, but as nothing happened their anxiety for me was converted into hatred. They looked on me as one who

had profaned the sanctuary.” Spurred on by his hatred of “the spirit of fanaticism” he found among the rabbis, Maimon “began to push matters a little further, frequently slept through the time of prayer, went seldom to the synagogue and so on” until he brought on the persecution that he had warned against. The Jews, for their part, deprived of a rational religion, had no way to incorporate Maimon’s critique into their practice, and so Maimon, like his predecessor Spinoza, was expelled from the synagogue.

Solomon Maimon was an advocate of the Enlightenment. He suggested that the study of mathematics and science would break the hold of the superstitious rabbis and bring Enlightenment to the Jewish people, but things turned out differently than expected. Larry Gopnik is a product of the Enlightenment. He is well-versed in both mathematics and physics, but physics isn’t what it was when the *Maskilim* in Berlin were in awe of Sir Isaac Newton and his marvelous system. Physics, as Gopnik teaches it, is Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle. In one of the film’s many dream sequences, Larry is dwarfed by a huge blackboard cov-

ered with incomprehensible equations. Explaining Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle to his students, Gopnik sums up everything by saying “it proves that we can’t really know what’s going on, but you’ll be responsible for it on the midterm.”

Unlike Larry Gopnik, the successful brother who makes a living teaching a theory in physics which doesn’t explain anything, Arthur, his older brother, is a loser in everyone’s estimation. He sleeps on the couch in the Gopnik’s living room. He spends most of his day draining the cyst on his neck, but unlike his brother, Arthur has come up with a system that actually works. The cabbalistic “Mentaculus,” is “a probability map of the universe,” which allows him to win money at cards: (“Some goys put together a private game. I think they’re Italian.”) even if it can’t keep him from soliciting at the town’s notorious gay bar and getting him arrested for sodomy. “What’s sodomy, dad?” Larry’s son asks, when the police show up at the Gopnik’s front door with Arthur in handcuffs.

When Larry consults a lawyer about his brother’s arrest, the lawyer asks him the same question: “Have you talked to the rabbi?”

Larry: “I talked to Nachner.”

Lawyer: “Did he tell you the story about the goy’s teeth? Go talk to Marshak. He’s a wise man.”

Before long, Larry is dreaming about people telling him to talk to the rabbi. In one dream sequence, the late Sy Abelman, still wearing the golfing outfit he died in, engages Larry in a debate over mathematics which ends with Sy banging Larry’s head against the black board while screaming over and



over "I f#@%ed your wife. See [Rabbi] Marshak."

Taking the advice of both the living and the dead, Larry finally goes to see Rabbi Marshak. "I need help," Larry tells Marshak's secretary. "I have a lot of *tsuris* [troubles] in my life. This is not a frivolous request. Tell him I need help." The secretary opens the door, and walks into the Rabbi's study. Rabbi Marshak is sitting behind his desk as she explains Larry's request. She returns and tells Larry, "the rabbi is busy."

"He doesn't look busy," Larry responds shrilly.

Secretary: "He's thinking."

The rabbis are not only totally useless when it comes to explaining the presence of evil in the world or giving advice, their rituals don't help either. Danny's bar mitzvah is the highpoint of the film; with Sy Abelman dead, it looks as if Larry

Larry is finally out of the woods is undermined further by the fact that Danny has to get stoned to go through with the ceremony. After a few tense moments, when it looks as if Danny might pass out in front of everyone, he finally finds his voice, sings the Torah, and, after it is all over, Rabbi Nachner greets Larry's totally stoned son as "a member of our tribe."

As a reward for his performance at the bar mitzvah, Danny, still stoned, gets to meet Rabbi Marshak, the man who refused to discuss his father's troubles because Marshak was busy "thinking." After a long walk through Marshak's cluttered study, Danny sits at the rabbi's feet, and after almost an entire film of anticipation, the senior rabbi finally opens his mouth and says: "When the truth is found to be lies/And all the joy within you dies. Denn wot?" Without waiting for

then tells the children that they all need to take shelter in the synagogue basement.

After getting arrested for sodomy, Arthur has reached the end of his rope. He runs out of their motel room screaming. Larry finds him sitting beside the motel's empty swimming pool sobbing: "Ha Shem hasn't given me s#\*%." In the most moving scene in the whole movie, Larry embraces his brother Arthur, and tries to offer him the consolation that has been denied him by the three rabbis.

"It'll be okay," Larry tells his brother. "We get Ron Meshbesh to take your case." Ron Meshbesh is the third lawyer Larry has had to consult. (Solomon Schlutz, the senior partner in the firm handling Larry's divorce, keeled over with a heart attack before he could give Larry any advice in the real estate battle Larry was having with his goy neighbor, the one who takes his son hunting when the boy should be in school.) Since Ron Meschbescher is a criminal lawyer, he requires a retainer fee of \$3,000 up front. Three thousand dollars is precisely the amount of money that a Korean student passed to Larry in an attempt to bribe him to change his failing grade. Larry looks at the retainer agreement from Ron Meshbesh. He then looks at his grade sheet. He then looks at the envelope from the Korean student containing the \$3,000 bribe. With the rain from the thunderstorm which has spawned the tornado now approaching his son's school pelting his window, Larry takes out a pencil and erases the F next to Mr. Park, the Korean student's name, and puts a C- in its place.

No sooner is the deed done than the phone on Larry's desk rings. It's

## Larry Gopnik is a product of the Enlightenment.

and his wife are going to get back together. As they sit in the synagogue waiting for Danny to go up and sing the Torah, Larry's wife tells him that "Sy admired you so much. He wrote letters to the tenure committee." The look on Larry's face indicates 1) just how he feels about his wife bringing up the now-dead Sy at a moment like this; as well as 2) the realization that he now knows who was writing all of those anonymous letters about Larry's moral turpitude to the tenure committee. Our sense that

an answer, the wise old rabbi continues by naming the members of the Jefferson Airplane. "It was wonderful," he says of the song he has been listening to for the past two weeks and hands Danny back the transistor radio with the \$20 bill in the case which his teacher confiscated from Hebrew class.

Cut to Danny listening to Jefferson Airplane in Hebrew class once more. This time, however, the Rabbi is interrupted by the school secretary, who tells him that a tornado is approaching. The Rabbi





the physician who gave him a clean bill of health at the beginning of the film. Something has showed up on the X-ray. Could Larry come in to discuss the results.

"Can't we discuss them over the phone?" Larry wants to know.

"No, in person would be better."

"When," Larry asks.

"Now," says the doctor. "Now would be good. I've cleared a place in my schedule."

Meanwhile, the Hebrew students have now gathered in the schoolyard, where they are being battered by the storm. Outside in schoolyard, one of his classmates tells Danny that "The wind is going to rip that f\*%#ing flag off the flag pole." The storm in this instance seems to symbolize the sexual revolution of the '60s, the revolution which New Left Red Diaper babies like David Horowitz created to punish the United States for treating their Stalinist parents so badly. Horowitz's participation in the sexual revolution—in particular, his affair with Abby

Rockefeller—destroyed his marriage and almost destroyed his life when he took to driving the sports car he bought as compensation for the break up of his marriage at unsafe speeds. He then converted from New Leftism to Neoconservatism but never stopped being a Jewish revolutionary, and his revolutionary activity never stopped being harmful to American culture.

When it comes to the Jews, America is doomed one way or an-

other. Suburbia, to get back to the film under discussion, is a creation of Jews like the Levitts, who gave us Levittown, the suburb that set the pattern of banality for the rest of the country for the post-World War II era. The Levitts came up with the mass produced slab house that the Coen brothers found so insufferable growing up. As in the pale of the settlement where the Jewish descendents of Solomon Maimon blamed the Czar for the tyranny of the rabbis, so in America, where the next generation of Gopniks finds the world their fathers created intolerable, and instead of killing their own rabbis, they kill the culture which harbored them instead. Like David Horowitz, they always run the danger of perishing in the conflagration they themselves started. That seems to be the meaning of the tornado at the end of the film.

Outside the synagogue, the rabbi is struggling unsuccessfully to find the key to open the door to the synagogue basement so that he can

lead his charges to safety. Danny Gopnik calls to Fagel the drug dealer as if to pay him back the \$20 he owes him, but his gaze is drawn instead to the tornado bearing down on all of them, about to destroy them. The Jews, the Coen brothers seem to be telling us, are facing some sort of catastrophe: either 1) the sexual revolution of the '60s which wiped out a significant portion of the baby boomer Jews, bringing about the demographic crisis to which Alan Dershowitz among others has alluded or 2) the tornado symbolizes some catastrophe looming for the Jews in 2010. After the neocon Jews pushed America into a disastrous war with Iraq which has led to a mountain of unrepayable debt, Jews like Mr. Blankfein of Goldman Sachs and Mr. Rubenstein of the Carlyle group (not to mention Alan Greenspan, Ben Shalom Bernanke, Larry Summers and Robert Rubin) presided over the looting of the American economy, piling more unrepayable debt onto the backs of the American people. Then, as if that weren't enough, the first group of Jews is now demanding that President Obama attack Iran.

At around the same time that the DVD of *A Serious Man* was released, neocon warmonger Daniel Pipes was writing an article on National Review Online entitled, "How to Save the Obama Presidency: Bomb Iran." And what was the Catholic reaction to this effrontery? William Donohue, head of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, wrote an editorial calling for economic sanctions against Iran.

Then, just to show that great minds run in the same circles, on



the same day, Deal Hudson, former editor of the now defunct *Crisis* magazine, wrote an editorial calling for the same thing. Now how is it that these great Catholic minds came to the same conclusion on an issue of no concern to Catholics on the same day? If you're really stumped, I recommend a short review of the political career of former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum. Santorum, used Jewish money to buy Catholic votes, and never did anything in return for the Catholics who elected him to office. Santorum ended his career in the Senate by campaigning for war with Iran. According to the late Tom Herron, Santorum's Iran-speech was both his political swan song and a job application. Then, lo and behold, where does former Senator Rick Santorum pop up af-

fronted by the fact that the rabbis do not have the keys of the kingdom and are blocking the door to salvation by refusing to go in themselves and preventing others from going in as well, the Jew considers becoming a Christian. After being spurned by both the rabbis and Enlightened Jews like Moses Mendelssohn, Solomon Maimon had reached the end his rope and concluded that "there was no alternative left but to embrace the Christian religion and get myself baptized in Hamburg" (p. 126).

Unlike Nicholas Donin and Joseph Pfefferkorn and Eugenio Zolli, the chief Rabbi of Rome who converted because of the heroic witness of Pope Pius XII during World War II, and Nathanael Kapner, Solomon Maimon never made it into the Church which is the ark of salvation. "I am a native

years—not indeed with any plan but merely to satisfy my thirst for knowledge. But as our nation is unable to use, not only such planless studies, but even those based on the most perfect plan, it cannot be blamed for becoming tired of them, and pronouncing their encouragement to be useless. I have therefore resolved, in order to secure temporal as well as eternal happiness, which depends on the attainment of perfection, and in order to become useful to myself as well as others, to embrace the Christian religion.

True to the vision of the man who founded their sect, the Lutherans never had a clear understanding of the relationship between faith and reason, and so passages like the following were bound to cause problems:

The Jewish religion, it is true, comes, in its articles of faith, nearer to reason than Christianity. But in practical use the latter has an advantage over the former; and since morality, which consists not in opinions but in actions, is the aim of all religion, clearly the latter comes nearer than the former to this aim. Moreover, I esteem the mysteries of the Christian religion for that which they are, that is allegorical representations of the truths that are most important to man. This I make my faith in them harmonize with reason, but I cannot believe them literally. I beg therefore most respectfully an answer to the question, whether after this confession I am worthy of the Christian religion or not. If I am, I am prepared to carry my proposal into effect; but if not, I must give up all claim

**"I must therefore remain what I am—a stiff-necked Jew."**

ter losing the election? At the American Enterprise Institute, where Jewish financiers like private equity king David Rubenstein can pay his salary directly.

The scene of the rabbi struggling to find right key to open the door to the synagogue basement is the second time that obliquely Christian themes made their appearance in *A Serious Man*. (The first came when Larry's daughter, hearing her uncle say for the nth time, "Just a minute," from the other side of the bathroom door, exclaimed "Jesus Christ.") Sooner or later, con-

of Poland," he told a Lutheran minister in Hamburg,

belonging to the Jewish nation, destined by my education and studies to be a rabbi; but in the thickest darkness, I have perceived some light. This has induced me to search further after light and truth and to free myself completely from the darkness of superstition and ignorance. As this could not be attained in my native place, I went to Berlin, where with the support of some enlightened men of our nation I studied for some



to a religion which enjoins me to lie, that is, to deliver a confession of faith which contradicts my reason. (p. 127).

If the Lutheran pastor was handicapped by the exaggeration of faith bequeathed to him by Luther, Maimon was equally handicapped by the truncated form of reason he derived from the Enlightenment. As a result, Maimon's conversion to Christianity never happened. In addition to impugning Maimon's motives ("your intention is to embrace the Christian religion merely in order to improve your temporal circumstances?" the Lutheran pastor misunderstood the relationship between faith and reason, claiming that Maimon was "too much of a philosopher to be able to become a Christian. Reason has taken the upper hand with you, and faith must accommodate itself to reason" (p. 128).

As a result of this rebuff, Maimon concluded that "I must therefore remain what I am—a stiff-necked Jew. My religion enjoins me to believe nothing, but to think the truth and practice goodness. . . . With this I bade the pastor good-bye."

Ultimately, Maimon fared no better with the Enlightened Jews of Berlin because, as he put it,

The Jewish nation is, apart from accidental modifications, a perpetual aristocracy under the guise of a theocracy. The learned men, who form the nobility in the nation, have been able, for many centuries, to maintain their position as the legislative body with so much authority among the common people, that they can do with them whatever they please. (p. 147).

Like Solomon Maimon, Brother Nathanael Kapner had to leave home in order to escape from the rabbis' power over him. In Kapner's case, it wasn't to Berlin that he fled, as Maimon had in the 1780s; it was to Los Angeles, where he began his undergraduate studies in 1968:

I finally left my home and synagogue to go to college in Los Angeles in 1968. But I forgot about my promise. It wasn't until 1970 that one of the Jesus Freaks, who were very popular at that time, gave me a New Testament. I opened it up and started reading the Gospel of St Matthew. I was struck by the "Jewishness" of the writing.

And I soon found myself captivated by the person of Jesus Christ! He was a man who rubbed shoulders with the common people. He was a man who taught the people from everyday life experiences. And what I liked most of all about Him was when He said to the religious leaders, "The harlots and tax collectors go into the kingdom of heaven before you." I could almost see Him saying this to Mrs Schecter, who called Him a "criminal." I simply found myself falling in love with Jesus Christ! I devoured the entire New Testament from cover

to cover and could not put it down. I did read about the sufferings of Jesus Christ, and it made me cry. And I did read the 'crazed writings' of St Paul and knew that there was nothing 'crazed' about it at all—but were words of hope and purpose. I said to myself, "Judaism is bankrupt. But the Christian message is full of promise and life."

When I finished the last Chapter of the Book of Revelations, now at the age of 21, I got down on my knees, wept, and asked Jesus Christ to forgive all my sins and be my Saviour.

Soon afterward I met an old pious woman at a Church gathering who came up to me and said, "God has so much for you and so much for you to do." Like a cryptic oracle, long awaiting its coming, I am





Rabbi Toaff greets Pope John Paul II at the synagogue in Rome.



just beginning, 37 years later, to see this prophecy come true.

As the reputed author of Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Fides et Ratio* and the heir of the Apostles, Joseph Ratzinger, both as bishop and pope, would seem to have an advantage over the poor Lutheran Pastor who turned Solomon Maimun away from Christianity, and yet if not hampered by a defective understanding of the relationship between faith and reason, the pope seems equally hampered by a desire to engage in dialogue with the rabbis, whom virtually all Jewish converts see as oppressors of the Jewish people. In his visit to the synagogue of Rome in January 2010, the pope cited Vatican II as the theological justification for his visit, claiming that

The teaching of the Second Vatican Council has represented for Catholics a clear landmark to which constant reference is made in our attitude and our relations with the Jewish people, marking a

new and significant stage. The Council gave a strong impetus to our irrevocable commitment to pursue the path of dialogue, fraternity and friendship, a journey which has been deepened and developed in the last forty years, through important steps and significant gestures.

As we have come to expect from meetings like this, what he said may have seemed supine to Catholics, but it was never enough to placate or mollify the stiff-necked rabbis, who continued to harp on Pope Pius XII, expecting—if not demanding—that Pope Benedict denounce him as a war criminal. The pope went on to add that, “I too, in the course of my Pontificate, have wanted to demonstrate my closeness to and my affection for the people of the Covenant.” But that overture met with an equally cold response. By now it should be obvious that trying to placate rabbis is a hopeless task. But worse than that, in his efforts to placate the rabbis, the pope is turning his back on the Brother

Nathanael Kapners, and Solomon Maimons, and—who knows?—Jews like the Coen Brothers, who see the rabbis as the oppressors of the Jewish people. Progress in Catholic-Jewish dialogue is another word for suppression of the truth. Dialogue with the rabbis means collaboration with the forces who are determined to keep Jews ignorant of Christ.

In his meeting with the rabbis at the synagogue in Rome in January, the pope attempted to find common ground in the Ten Commandments, because

The “Ten Commandments” call us to preserve and to promote the sanctity of the family, in which the personal and reciprocal, faithful and definitive “Yes” of man and woman makes room for the future, for the authentic humanity of each, and makes them open, at the same time, to the gift of new life. To witness that the family continues to be the essential cell of society and the basic environment in which human virtues are learned and practised is a precious service offered in the construction of a world with a more human face.

The sentiments are noble enough, but the pope's statement ignores the role which the rabbis have played in promoting divorce, both at the time of Christ and in 2010, and in the intervening period as well. Like Larry Gopnik's wife, Solomon Maimun's wife wanted a divorce, and both Mrs. Gopnik and Mrs. Maimon discovered that the best place to go for assistance in getting one is to the rabbis. Maimon was reluctant to grant

(continued on p. 47)



# The Great Hutaree Bust: Dogpatch calls for Armed Insurrection, Antichrist dodges a bullet

by E. Michael Jones

On Monday, March 29, the U.S. attorney's office in Detroit, Michigan announced the arrest of "seven men and one woman believed to be part of the Michigan-based [Christian Militia group known as the] Hutaree . . . over the weekend in raids in Michigan, Indiana and Ohio." These "Nine alleged members of a Christian militia group," we are told, who were "girding for battle with the Antichrist," were charged Monday with "plotting to kill a police officer and slaughter scores more by bombing the funeral—all in hopes of touching off a an uprising against the US government." US Attorney General Eric Holder underscored the gravity of the situation when he announced that the FBI had just dealt "a severe blow to a dangerous organization that today stands accused of conspiring to levy war against the United States."

The visuals which accompanied the story, however, did little to reinforce the high drama which the press conference hoped to inspire. The front page story was accompanied by a picture of the rusted trailer which Hutaree leader David Brian Stone called home, and there leaning next to a washing machine in the front yard was a lone rifle. Missing from the picture was jug of moonshine. Similarly, Daisy Mae and Li'l Abner were nowhere to be seen. In spite of that, the caption under the photo could have read: "Dogpatch calls for armed insurrection!" But that would have undermined the high seriousness of the US attorney's press conference and the sense that we had all dodged a serious terrorist attack, which was palpable in Attorney General Holder's remarks.

The plausibility of the government's story began to

decline in direct proportion to the details they released to the press. According to the indictment, the Hutaree, all eight of them, who communicated with each other in "a secret language that few are privileged to know," felt that "setting off bombs at a police funeral, using a fake 911 call to lure an officer to his death, killing an officer after a traffic stop, or attacking the family of an officer," would "serve as a catalyst for more widespread uprising against the government." That is how the government framed its case in the indictment unsealed on March 29.

Armed with evidence of this sort, the two intrepid AP reporters who filed this story then tracked down the ex-wife of Hutaree Leader David Brian Stone, who opined that "It started out as a Christian thing." Stone's ex-wife Donna Stone then continued with her account making it seem that going to Church set off a chain reaction that led directly to terrorism, "You go to church. You pray. You take care of your family. I think David started to take it a little too far."

The charges against the eight Hutaree warriors included "teaching the use of explosives," but when the AP reporters tried to substantiate that claim, the trail suddenly turned cold. Kelly Sickles, who, unlike Donna Stone, was still married to one of the defendants, claimed that her husband Kristopher "doesn't even know how to make a bomb. We had no bomb materials here." She then told the AP that she "couldn't believe her 27-year-old husband could be involved in anything violent."

"It was just survival skills," she said. "That's what they were learning. And it's just patriotism. It's in our constitution."





As if to provide further corroboration of the blood-thirsty nature of Hutaree warriors who planned to “levy war” against the United States, the AP reporters tell us that “The mother of one defendant . . . took away his two guns . . . because she thought he needed mental health treatment.”

By this point, it had become abundantly clear that the great Hutaree uprising story was *prima facie* preposterous. And yet not one commentator that I read seemed to think there was anything wrong with claiming that a mentally deranged man whose mother had taken his guns away from him would have toppled the United States government if the FBI hadn’t intervened.

If anything, the commentary of the chattering classes was even more hysterical than the indictment released by the prosecutor in Detroit. Eugene Robinson claimed that

The arrests of members of a Michigan-based “Christian” militia group should convince doubters that there is good reason to worry about right-wing, anti-government extremism—and potential violence—in the Age of Obama. . . . For decades now, the most serious threat of domestic terrorism has come from the growing ranks of the paranoid, anti-government hate groups that draw their inspiration and vocabulary and anger from the far right. . . . There has been an explosive growth among far-right militia-type groups that

identify themselves as white supremacists.

Then, as if recognizing that there is no evidence to substantiate claims like this, Robinson adds that “Most of the groups . . . have been infiltrated and dismantled by authorities before they could do any damage.” In other words, the fact that groups like this have accomplished nothing is proof of how dangerous they are and how desperately we need the FBI to protect us. Then, as if determined not to let a good indictment go to waste, Robinson attacks “The vitriolic anti-government hate speech that is

spewed on talk radio every day . . . [which] is calibrated not to inform but to incite” as being somehow responsible for the uprising that never took place.

Within minutes of the arrests, the key to understanding the meaning of it all was posted on the web. The worst example of this instant analysis came from the pen [or keyboard] of Mark Guarino. In an article entitled “Hutaree: Why is the Midwest a hotbed of Militia Activity?” written for the *Christian Science Monitor* and then repeated *ad nauseam* over other outlets like Fox News and Yahoo.com, Guarino opined that “Michigan, the home base of the Hutaree

**Attorney General Eric Holder announced that the FBI had just dealt “a severe blow to a dangerous organization that today stands accused of conspiring to levy war against the United States.”**

militia, has one of the highest concentrations in the United States of militias and other extremist groups that see the federal government as the enemy.”

And just how does he know this? Well, because the Southern Poverty Law Center said so. In fact, the intrepid investigative reporter from the *Christian Sci-*



Eleven members of the Molly Maguires marching to their deaths in Pottsville, Pennsylvania on June 21, 1877.



ence reading room goes on to tell us that “Only Texas, with 57 so-called ‘patriot’ groups, outstrips Michigan’s 47, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), a nonprofit civil rights organization in Montgomery, Ala., that tracks hate group activity.” Not only that, barely able to catch his breath, Guarino informs us that “between 2008 and 2009, the number of such groups has increased from 149 to 512.” And just in case we were wondering where he got these figures, Guarino again cites the SPLC as his source. In spite of the fact that the basis for these claims resides solely with a group whose sole purpose for existence is the discovery of “hate groups” of this sort, Guarino goes on to conclude that “The arrests point to how the Midwest in particular has become a hotbed for patriot activity.” Making his lone foray outside the walls of SPLC headquarters, Guarino cites a certain Chip Berlet, who is “an analyst at Political Research Associates, a think tank in Somerville, Mass.” Bertlet claims that “There are a number of regional factors that, over time and at various moments, helped the militia movement . . . emerge . . . strongly in the upper Midwest.” Those factors include, “shared anxiety among lower-to-middle-class people is often a catalyst for generating conspiracy theories, which have the potency to provoke people to take up arms and commit violence.”

Having touched that base, Guarino returns to the comforting bosom of the SPLC, in particular to “Heidi Beirich, SPLC’s director of research,” who tells us that “Several extremist groups were formed following the 1992 election of Bill Clinton, and they were active during his presidency.” Then, as if suddenly aware that this hardly constitutes news, Beirich adds

for good measure, “The roots of militia activity are there [in Michigan], so if you want to organize something you know who to call.”

Having exhausted his sources at the SPLC, Guarino is reduced to citing unnamed “experts” to prove his claim that the Midwest is a “hotbed” of revolutionary fervor, as when he writes that “Experts say a combination of

factors contribute to the rise in militias: a faltering economy, changing roles within the traditional family structure, and shifts in the racial makeup of the country’s population.”

This is what passes for journalism in, as Eugene Robinson puts it, “the Age of Obama.”

Not to be outdone by his colleagues in the fourth estate, Leonard Pitts links Christians and Muslims and anyone who takes religion seriously to the Hutaree conspiracy. “The idea of some innate saving difference between us and those bearded others in other places,” is, according to Pitts, nothing more than “a fiction we conjured to help us sleep at night.” According to the pundit from Orlando, Florida, the Christ whom Christians in places like Michigan and Indiana worship turns out to be just “like the Allah for whom certain Muslims blow up marketplaces and crowded buses.” Muslim and American terrorists, it seems, “both serve a puny and impotent God who can’t do anything without their help.” Pitts closes his peroration by making a brief stab at analysis—“a sense of cultural dislocation and economic uncertainty . . . moves people out to the fringes where they seek out scapegoats and embrace that feeble God”—followed by a hymn of thanks to the FBI for protecting us from the trailer trash in southern Michigan: “Sometimes I think the only thing that keeps us from becoming, say, Afghanistan, is a strong central government and a diverse population with a robust tradition of free speech.”

By now it should be obvious that the role of the press in covering the Hutaree story was not to uncover what was really going on but to provide cover for the FBI by retailing the reports of the SPLC. In spite of a



few exceptions that get trotted out to justify more oppression, the “robust tradition of free speech” invoked by Mr. Pitts to justify the actions of the FBI turns out to be largely an illusion:

By the Second World War, according to Merton and Lazerfeld, the press functioned in three main ways. First, to decide which are the legitimate subjects of public discussion. Second to enhance the authority of and bestow prestige on those persons, organizations, and social movements deemed desirable by its editors. Finally, to reaffirm existing social norms and to expose deviance. In this context, it was far less likely that the powerful in society would be portrayed as criminally deviant. There were, of course, criminal businessmen, but these were seen as exceptional and deviant individuals in a fundamentally sound system.

Americans of all stripes run amok periodically and kill lots of people, and the FBI can't seem to stop them. Instead, like the drunk who decides to look for his lost car keys under the lamppost because the light is better there, the FBI infiltrates groups which it considers deviant and easy to take down, and then accuses them of the crimes they can't prevent the real criminals from committing.

**By Day Two of the Great FBI Hutaree Bust, the government's case had “entrapment” written all over it.**

Guarino claims that “Several high-profile murders have occurred” recently “including those of Kansas abortion doctor George Tiller and a Holocaust Museum guard in Washington,” but he never gets around to explaining why the examples he has cited are more “high-profile” than other cases, like, say the case of Amy Bishop. Unlike the nine members of the Hutaree that are now behind bars, Professor Bishop actually killed a number of people, three of whom were people of color. Since Amy Bishop is white, her murder spree at the University of Georgia at Huntsville sounded like the ideal candidate for a hate crime prosecution, but

then it turned out that Amy Bishop was Jewish and at that point all talk of her crime as paradigmatic of anything other than mental illness suddenly ceased.

When Guarino says that — “There is concern that this current wave of militia activity is more potent than it was during the Clinton era. The Internet allows conspiracy ideology to travel faster and marginalized individuals to connect with one another across greater distances. Meanwhile, there is increased political polarization” — what he really means is that the FBI and the SPLC and their lackeys in the mainstream press are themselves involved in a conspiracy to find scapegoats for current problems among “marginalized individuals.” People with political or financial clout somehow never get indicted by the FBI.

As more information came out, the FBI's role in Hutaree activity loomed larger and larger, to the point of causing one to wonder if there would have been a case against them without FBI involvement. In another news account,

Assistant US Attorney Joseph Falvey, Jr. argued that there was nothing wrong with owning guns or hating the government. But it's illegal, he added, when “people with dark hearts and evil intents” gather to discuss ways to commit violence.

And how did the FBI know that the Hutaree had “dark hearts and evil intents”? Well, the FBI had such detailed information because they had planted an informant in the organization. According to Assistant US Attorney Ronald Waterstreet, the prosecutor who was pursuing the case, the FBI had detailed tape-recordings of

the Hutaree's plans, which included statements by Hutaree leader Stone claiming “We are the American military. We [meaning the nine defendants] outnumber them.” What is more, the prosecutor also announced that “The agent, who infiltrated the Hutaree group . . . had built explosives under Stone's direction. . . .”

It would be interesting to know if the FBI has tapes of the conversation about making explosive devices. Just who brought up the subject of building a bomb? The leader of Hutaree or the agent assigned to bring them down? This statement, coupled with the claim of





Mrs. Sickles, means of course that the only reason the Hutaree had explosive devices is because the FBI agent constructed them for them. That, of course, makes this man an agent provocateur. Questions like this are something only a jury can decide, but by Day Two of the Great FBI Hutaree Bust, the government's case had "entrapment" written all over it.

The use of agents provocateurs to bring down undesirable groups in America antedates the founding of the FBI. At some time around 1870 Franklin McGowan, a Pottsville, Pennsylvania railroad magnate, hired a secret agent by the name of James McParlan to infiltrate the Irish community in the coal mining district of northeastern Pennsylvania. After joining the Ancient Order of Hibernians and gaining the confidence of the Irish coal miners he would eventually betray, McParlan began submitting reports about the conspiratorial plans of a group of the AOH's inner circle, which he began calling the Molly Maguires. Whether the Molly Maguires actually existed as an organization, much less as a group of terrorists became a moot point when the head of the Pinkerton Detective Agency released a book entitled *The Molly Maguires and the Detectives*, which set the facts of the case in stone in the public mind before the trials were completed, prejudicing the jury against the defendants. The Pinkerton Detective agency specialized in spying on and infiltrating unions and as part of their propaganda ministry eventually produced 18 semi-fictional novels extolling the virtues of their

agents. The hapless Irish coal miners were no match for this sort of public relations campaign; the defendants were all hanged, and the lesson that capitalism was in control of a government which proclaimed it was of the people, by the people, and for the people was not lost on the survivors.

The attack on the so-called "Molly Maguires" would set the pattern for future campaigns against groups the government and its plutocratic controllers considered deviant. As the Michigan Hutaree would find out 140 years later, "marginalized individuals," to use Mark Guarino's term, unsettled by a "faltering economy," were accused of plotting against the government as a way of distracting the populace from the fact that the government itself was in the hands of plutocratic looters whose immorality and oftentimes criminality was redefined out of existence.

The Italians were soon to succeed the Irish as the next group of "marginalized individuals" who posed a threat to the well-being of the republic. Al Capone, who had his own flair for self-promotion, was a creation of the FBI, as was the Mafia, if by that term we mean a nationally organized "crime syndicate." The term "Mafia" entered the American vocabulary when nine Italians were put on trial for the murder of New Orleans Police Chief David Hennessy on February 16, 1891. In order to make the charges stick, "Italian-Americans were characterized as prone to violence, vendettas and extortion and unwilling to cooperate with authorities." The Mafia message never changed after that:

A foreign conspiracy was corrupting the police; therefore, the police had to be given more power. . . . By constantly highlighting the "Mafia supercriminal organization," US opinion makers had ensured that people's perception of organized crime was as limited as their own. The constant speculation, hyperbole, preaching and mythmaking served to confuse and distract attention away from failed policies, institutional corruption and much systematic activity that was more damaging and destructive than "Mafia" crimes. . . . Concentration on the Mafia diverted attention away from corruption in government and business.

The point of the FBI was to divert attention from serious crime and create as its foil a number of colorful characters from marginalized groups and give the impression that without the FBI's efforts Italian mafiosi would ruin an otherwise virtuous country.



In the case of the “Molly Maguires,” the defendants were hanged as a way of intimidating the survivors into accepting economic injustice. It was an early example of state-sponsored terrorism, or perhaps “night watchman state terrorism,” since the state all but abdicated its role to the plutocratic private enterprises who wanted to use the Mollys as a way of intimidating the workers. As Harold Aurand put it,

The Molly Maguire investigation and trials were one of the most astounding surrenders of sovereignty in American history. A private corporation initiated the investigation through a private detective agency; a private police force arrested the alleged offenders; and coal company attorneys prosecuted them. The state provided only the courtroom and the hangman. The fate of the Mollys taught the people of the anthracite region that the Coal and Iron police were supreme within the area.

The term agent provocateur was never used by either the Fourth Estate or the FBI in conjunction with the Hutaree case, but the FBI has a long history of using agents provocateurs. Churchill and Vander Wall claim that “Agents provocateurs were . . . routinely assigned to disrupt the internal functioning of targeted groups and to assist in the spread of disinformation. In fact, “In a film prepared for the Public Broadcasting

and Vander Wall,

In November of 1968, J. Edgar Hoover dispatched a Memorandum calling up on his field agents “to exploit all avenues of creating . . . dissension within the ranks of the BPP [Black Panther Party]” and stating that “recipient offices are instructed to submit imaginative and hard-hitting counterintelligence measures aimed at crippling the BPP.”

In order to infiltrate and destroy the Black Panthers, the FBI hired a black felon by the name of William O’Neal and inserted him as an agent provocateur into the Chicago branch of the BPP:

In late 1968, Special Agent Ray Mitchell was assigned to augment the Chicago field offices’ Racial Matters Squad, headed by SA Robert Piper. One of Mitchell’s first acts in his new job was to bring an individual named William O’Neal, recently arrested twice, on one occasion for interstate car theft, and the other for impersonating a federal officer (e.g., he had manufactured and used phony FBI identification). Apparently, in exchange for a monthly stipend and the dropping of these charges, O’Neal agreed to infiltrate the Chicago BPP as a counterintelligence operative. To this end, he went to the Panther Headquarters at 2350 Madison Street on the day it opened and joined the chapter. The infiltrator was quickly accepted and placed in positions of confidence by Hampton and Chicago Minister of Defense Bobby Rush, as is evidenced by the speed with which he became Director of Chapter Security and [Chicago BPP chief, Fred] Hampton’s personal bodyguard. According to SA Mitchell, by February 1969 O’Neal was functioning as the “number three man” in the Chicago BPP and was in line for national Party Office.

### **The most famous use of agents provocateurs in FBI history was the Cointelpro operation against the Black Panthers in Chicago.**

Service in 1971, journalist Paul Jacobs interviewed three men who insist their agent contacts encouraged them to join in bombings and burnings, or to propose that the groups they infiltrated commit criminal acts.”

There is a certain element of irony in the press coverage of the Hutaree case. Two of the most ardent defenders of the FBI and its tactics were Robinson and Pitts, two black pundits who evidently are unaware that the most famous use of agents provocateurs in FBI history was the Cointelpro operation against the Black Panthers in Chicago. According to Churchill

Once O’Neal had gained the trust of Fred Hampton and Bobby Rush, he began stockpiling weapons and provoking armed conflict with other Chicago gangs. On April 2, 1969, Rush led an armed attack on the Blackstone Rangers, something which earned him a pay raise at FBI headquarters. In June of 1969 O’Neal acquired military style weapons and initiated a weapons training program for Black Panthers at a farm in Michigan. When the Bureau conducted a raid on the Panthers’ Monroe St. office, it was the arms cache purchased by O’Neal that they discovered and



which they then used as proof that the Panthers were a dangerous organization, even though other FBI memos at the time indicate that the chief BPP thorn in the FBI's side was the Panthers' Free Breakfast for Children program, something which became apparent on July 31, when Chicago police ransacked the BPP Monroe Street office, "smashing typewriters, destroying food and medical supplies for the Panther health clinic and breakfast program," as well as "setting several small fires, and beating and arresting several Panthers for 'obstruction.'"

In October 1969 O'Neal moved the BPP arms cache to the apartment at 2337 West Monroe Street which Fred Hampton had just rented with his girlfriend Deborah Johns, who was pregnant with their child. In September, O'Neal had already met with Special Agent Mitchell at the Golden Torch restaurant in downtown Chicago, where he had passed on a detailed map of the floor-plan of Hampton's apartment.

During the evening of December 3, 1969, Agent O'Neal prepared a meal for Hampton and his fiancée and other Panther party members. The beverage O'Neal served with the meal was Kool-Aid laced with secobarbital, a powerful barbiturate provided by the FBI. Hampton and his associates went to bed at around midnight, at which point O'Neal

slipped out of the apartment. At around 1:30 AM on December 4, Hampton fell asleep in mid-sentence during a phone conversation with his brother. At 4:45 AM a group of agents from Cook County State Attorney Edward Hanrahan's office stormed Hampton's apartment and opened fire on Black Panther Mark Clark, who had fallen asleep in a chair in the living room with a shotgun in his lap. Clark reflexively pulled the trigger, firing a round into the ceiling just before he died. It was the only shot the Panthers fired that night. The drugged Panthers were unable to wake up, much less organize any armed resistance to the raiding party, which continued to spray the apartment with automatic weapons fire. Fred Hampton, who was

wounded in the shoulder, was dragged out of his bedroom and shot twice in the head at point blank range. The other Panthers, most of whom had been wounded in the raid, were dragged outside, beaten, and charged with aggravated assault and attempted murder. Each suspect was then held on \$100,000 bail.

Then as now the press was complicit. Both CBS-TV and the *Chicago Tribune* went along with the FBI in fabricating evidence and portraying the police as acting in self-defense. Agent Provocateur O'Neal was paid a bonus for his efforts but later committed suicide. The Hampton and Clark families later filed a \$47.7 million law suit against Edward V. Hanrahan et al., a suit which eventually got settled in 1983, without a jury. John F. Grady, the presiding judge in the case, ruled that "there had in fact been an active governmental conspiracy to deny Hampton, Clark and the BPP plaintiffs their civil rights" and "sanctions were imposed upon the FBI for its cover-up activities

**Instead of admitting that they had killed an innocent bystander, the mother of kidnapper and bank robber Fred Barker, the FBI, with the media as their willing accomplices, created the legend of "Ma Barker."**

and an award of \$1.85 million went to the survivors and the families of the deceased."

After this and other COINTELPRO operations were exposed during the Church Committee hearings in 1976, the FBI promised to mend its ways, claiming that the "excesses" of COINTELPRO would "never happen again." If they show nothing else, the Hutaree arrests in March 2010 show that the FBI is incapable of transcending its own bad DNA. Churchill and Vander Wall argue that the FBI "was founded, maintained and steadily expanded as a mechanism to forestall, curtail, and repress the expression of political diversity within the United States." After formulating the "legal basis" for the Palmer raids of the early '20s,





Hoover advised President Herbert Hoover that the bonus army of World War I veterans destitute in 1932 because of the Depression and the failure of the government to pay them were made up of "criminals and communists" and cleared the way for the military style attack on those veterans.

Hoover then went on to involve the FBI in "a campaign against Marcus Garvey which resulted in his frame-up on false charges, and ultimately [in 1927] his deportation as an 'undesirable alien,'" a strategy which severely diminished the potential of his then-vibrant Universal Negro Improvement Association. If we ask what do the Palmer raids, the bonus army, Marcus Garvey, the Black Panthers, and the Hutaree have in common, the answer is nothing, nothing other than the FBI's desire to suppress what it construes as "deviant."

Hoover succeeded largely because he had his own publicity department at his disposal, in particular a mythmaker by the name of Courtney Ryley Cooper, who wrote pulp fictions about "Fearless young G-men using an army of ingenious weapons and arcane technologies, and their lieutenants reporting through a flawless command structure to the supercop at the top, 'the most feared man the underworld has ever

known'—J. Edgar Hoover." Hoover was "one of the greatest propagandists ever to grace the federal bureaucracy," but he could also count on a compliant press to do his bidding as well, something which is still the case, as can be seen in the way the pundits treated the Hutaree bust.

Whenever an operation went bad, Hoover's publicity department was there to recreate it as an FBI triumph. This was the case with the murder of Kate Barker. Instead of admitting that they had killed an innocent bystander, the mother of kidnapper and bank robber Fred Barker, the FBI, with the media as their willing accomplices, created the legend of "Ma Barker," a legend that was still around when Roger Corman, the king of B movies, filmed *Bloody Mama* in the '60s, with Shelley Winters portraying a cigar-chomping, Tommy-gun-toting Ma Barker. J. Edgar Hoover outdid himself in covering up the murder of Mrs. Barker when he claimed that she was not only "the brains behind a gang of desperadoes," but, in a tribute to the psychology of John B. Watson, the regnant authority on childraising at the time, "a monument to the evils of parental indulgence" as well. The press went along with this hoax because they "liked the idea of a gun-crazy old woman, and the idea that she may have been an innocent victim was unthinkable."

Running alongside the story of the great Hutaree bust in Michigan was the story of four coal miners trapped in a mine in West Virginia which had been cited repeatedly for violations of mine safety regulations. Mining disasters and FBI raids are the two constants of American newspapers. Some things never change. Mines are still dangerous places because their owners ignore safety regulations in order to make money, and the FBI is still busy creating mythical villains to distract us from the criminal activity that is deemed acceptable by the people who control our government. Nothing has changed in this regard since the days of the Molly Maguires. As Edward A. Ross put it in 1907, "the public heeds the little overt offender more than the big covert offender." The FBI with its G-men stories has always been one of the ways the government has diverted our attention away from the looting involved in capitalism, which is another word for "white collar crime." The man who popularized the term was a professor at Indiana University by the name of Edwin H. Sutherland. His book *White*





Collar Crime (1949) was, according to Woodiwiss, "the most ambitious attempt to uncover business criminality since the muckraking era." Instead of viewing immigrants, i.e., the Irish and the Italians, as the source of the problem, Sutherland claimed that "The powerful were exploiting the very immigrants who were supposed to be the main source of the problem, paying them wages below permissible limits, making them work in unsafe working conditions, and illegally breaking their unions."

According to Sutherland, "the present day white collar criminals are more suave and less forthright than the robber barons of the last century but not less criminal. Criminality has been demonstrated again and again in reports of investigations of land offices, railways, insurance, munitions, banking, public utilities, stock exchanges, the petroleum industry, the real estate industry, receiverships, bankruptcies and politics." Sutherland argued that "persons of the upper socioeconomic class differ from the criminal behavior of the lower socioeconomic class principally in the administrative procedures which are used in dealing with the offenders; and that variations in administrative procedures are not significant from the point of view of causation of crime."

White Collar Crime is another word for Capitalism. Or, as Dorr and Simpson put it:

It must be emphasized that the criminal frauds which cause the biggest losses are organized schemes, carried on as a regular business, and in many of the most serious cases, masquerading as legitimate business enterprises... the line between criminal and non-criminal activity is thus frequently a rather arbitrary one. Commercial fraud is more often business run amuck than an offshoot of ordinary crimes against property, and the typical criminal of this class is not the bandit or the recidivist but the businessman gone wrong.

And Capitalism is another word for looting. Capitalism as we know it came into existence following the looting of Church property in 16<sup>th</sup> century England. In Elizabethan England, looters like Francis Drake were knighted and priests like the Jesuit Edmund Campion were hanged, drawn and quartered for saying Mass. The other big story in the news at the time of the Hutaree arrests was the allegations leveled against the pope as an abettor of sex abuse. Some things never change. This story never changes because capitalism, which is to say, looting is part of America's DNA. To the extent that the Church opposes the capitalist empire, it will find itself demonized. Commenting on the priest scandals in Ireland, Mary Kenny wrote:

Market capitalism, which is essential to the Celtic tiger boom, depends on individual lifestyle choices, initiative, tolerance of diversity. It also depends on people valuing, not rebuffing, material gain. The "authoritarianism" of the Catholic Church, with its strong directional tradition and concept of orthodoxy, is anathema to the market. Individualism is essential. Those who have studied their Max Weber (*The Protestant Work Ethic and the Rise of Capitalism*) would say that it was not coincidental that Catholicism receded as capitalism triumphed: they would say it was necessary for Catholicism to recede in order for capitalism to triumph. The Protestant mindset, that you make your own choices for salvation, bypassing any form of "priest-craft," is a cultural precondition for free market capitalism.



Were there any conspiracy-theory Trotskyites left under the age of 60, they might almost suspect a capitalist plot to discredit the priests, to free Ireland for market capitalism.

As I write this, the English pundit Christopher Hitchens is calling for the arrest of the pope when he arrives in England. At the same time, Irish pundits are using the priest crisis to call for the seizure of Church property. The more things change, the more they remain the same. We are still living in Elizabethan England because we are still living under the operating system that was created at that time, the cultural and political operating system known as Capitalism. The ruling class is still involved in looting and in creating plots to distract us from their crimes, things like the Babington Plot, which led to the murder of the Catholic Maria Stuart, the rightful heir to the English

**Walsingham, like the FBI, made use of an agent provocateur by the name of Gilbert Gifford as well as forged documents to implicate Mary in the Babington plot and bring about her beheading.**

throne. Walsingham, like the FBI, made use of an agent provocateur by the name of Gilbert Gifford as well as forged documents to implicate Mary in the plot and bring about her beheading.

I suggest that you keep all this in mind the next time you hear that the Midwest is a "hotbed" of subversive activity. What the pundits really mean when they say this is that the FBI and the SPLC are concerned about the Midwest, which means that the Midwest must be showing some resistance to the regime in ways that, say, New Jersey or California are not.

The FBI, it turns out, isn't the only federal agency with its eye on southern Michigan and northern Indiana. Around the same time that the Hutaree militia members were arrested, the FDA announced an outbreak of campylobacteriosis, which is to say food poi-

soning. There is no denying that 18 people in southern Michigan got sick, but why they got sick is the issue. The government immediately attributed it to the consumption of raw milk.

What the FDA failed to say is that the overwhelming majority of those who drank raw milk from the Forest Grove dairy in Middlebury, Indiana did not get sick, but that 11 of the 18 who did also attended a potluck where Caesar Salad made with raw egg was served. The milk from Forest Grove dairy was tested four times and each time no campylobacter was found. The eggs in the Caesar Salad were never tested.

There are signs of concern that hit closer to home as well. Shortly before the Hutaree arrests, *Culture Wars* held its conference on "the End of Dialogue and the Beginning of Unity." That conference took place in northern Indiana about six miles from the Michigan border, in other words, right in the middle of the SPLC-designated "hotbed." During one of the breaks at that conference, I was approached by a white-haired man wearing a baseball cap with "Jesus is Lord" written across the front. The man didn't give me his name; instead, he cut to the chase and asked me if I were interested in forming a "Catholic militia." I responded by telling him the story of David

James, the man with whom I play Irish music. During the late '60s, when David was hippie in residence at Notre Dame, a man in a suit approached him and asked him if he were a revolutionary. David must have said yes, because the man then led him to his car, opened its trunk revealing a cache of weapons, and told David to take one. "He wanted David to pick up a gun," I told the agent provocateur who approached me at the *Culture Wars* Unity conference, "so that he could kill him."

The same man approached conference speaker Dave Wemhoff in the men's room. Dave, who is a retired colonel who has served most recently in Afghanistan, responded by saying, that Catholics didn't need a militia; "that's why we have the police."



# REVIEWS

## Augustine on the Elder Brother

**PAULA FREDRIKSEN, *AUGUSTINE AND THE JEWS: A CHRISTIAN DEFENSE OF JEWS AND JUDAISM* (NEW YORK: DOUBLEDAY, 2008), 488 PP, ISBN: 978-0-385-50270-2**

Paula Fredriksen is a Jewish professor at the Religion department of Boston University. She resides both in Boston and Jerusalem. She has written a number of books about Christ and Christianity, including *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews: A Jewish Life and the Emergence of Christianity*, which won her the 1999 National Jewish Book Award, and *From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Christ*, which was used as a working document for a popular *Frontline* documentary. In addition to *Augustine and the Jews*, she has also written *Augustine on Romans*. In 2004, she was highly critical of Mel Gibson's film, *The Passion of the Christ*, claiming, *inter alia*, that the movie was "inaccurate" in many places. It is my understanding that Ms. Fredriksen does not claim to be a Christian; rather, she is a Jewish historian of Christianity, much like Amy Jill Levine is a Jewish professor of New Testament at Vanderbilt University as well as a practicing Jew. By all counts, Ms. Fredriksen is from the liberal school of academic theology and she treats the subject of Jesus and Christianity from that perspective. This school of thought, by and large, does not believe

Scripture is divinely inspired (in the traditional definition), and thus the history and even the theology is only a product of its human authors. One of Ms. Fredriksen's more controversial claims is that the Jews had little or nothing to do with the execution of Jesus, the responsibility for that event being laid solely at the feet of the Romans.

The title of Ms. Fredriksen's new work, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism*, is another in a line of treatises written by Jewish scholars (and liberal Catholics partial to Jewish historiography) for the purpose of giving the Christian stamp of approval to modern Judaism as a viable and divinely accepted religion, as well as to show evidence where the Church thought more highly of the Jews than other non-Christian religions. The publisher is quite candid with at least one of the reasons the book was published: "Augustine and the Jews sheds new light on the origins of anti-Semitism and, through Augustine, opens a path toward better understanding between two of the world's great religions." Even though the Jews specifically reject the central tenet of the Christian

faith, namely, that Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God, Ms. Fredriksen seeks to convince her reader that there is a "Christian defense" for Judaism, hoping to mollify any anti-Jewish sentiment remaining from the Catholic patristic and medieval eras. In doing so, she introduces the novel idea that Augustine, at least in the latter stages of his career, should be seen as the pioneering Catholic who creates a new and favorable Jewish apologetic for the Catholic Church, which is a dramatic shift from "any volume of Augustine's sermons [that] reveals the familiar themes of *adversus Iudaeos* invective: Jews are blind, hard-hearted, fleshly, stubborn, and prideful; they murdered Christ; they are exiles; they carry the church's books; they are saved only by conversion" (*Augustine and the Jews*, p. 311). In creating the new Augustine, however, Ms. Fredriksen admits she has one big strike against her. The other Fathers and the Church at large prior to and contemporaneous with Augustine's supposed new thought, do not provide any such defense of the Jews and Judaism, which seems to be the reason that Doubleday views them, and even the early Augustine, as fomenting "the origins of anti-Semitism." According to the publisher, and most likely Ms. Fredriksen herself, Augustine stands alone in the effort to make Judaism one of "the world's great religions."<sup>i</sup> Whether she is right or wrong on this thesis, in part or in whole, will be the main subject of my review.

Recently, Ms. Fredriksen wrote a summary article of *Augustine and the Jews* for the annual edition of *US News and World Report's* "Mys-





teries of Faith" for December 2009. Whether it is relevant or not, it should be stated that *US News and World Report* has a heavily-weighted Jewish editorial board, with the editor-in-chief being Mortimer B. Zuckerman, and the *Mysteries of Faith* editors being Peter W. Bernstein and senior editor Amy D. Bernstein. Be that as it may, since Ms. Fredriksen has summarized the main and most convincing arguments from her book in this short three-page article, for the sake of brevity we will draw mainly from it in our review but will consult her book for clarification on certain issues.

In line with the above observation that Ms. Fredriksen views Au-

gustine as holding the pioneering opinion for the Catholic Church in regards to the Jews, the subtitle she or the editors chose for the *US News* article is: "Alone among his peers, this leader of the early church gave the Hebrews a privileged place in Christian society." The editor (probably one of the

Bernsteins noted above) then says: "She [Fredriksen] argues that Augustine gradually began to see their [the Jews'] role as different from pagans and schismatics, concluding that Jews should not be forced to conform to the new Christian orthodoxy." Actually, Ms. Fredriksen goes a little further, for she asserts that Augustine promoted the idea that the continued existence of the Jews and Judaism was under the vigilance of God to such a point that "the synagogues of the late Roman Empire" testify to the fact that this protection is from "God himself," and from this the reader is to infer that because "the Jews. . . should be unimpeded in their religious practice," God had no pressing interest to have the Jews convert to the Christian faith, for He wanted "the Jews to remain Jews." Here is Ms. Fredriksen's opening paragraph:

In the twilight of the Western

### **Ellis' article was a classic statement of what is now known as the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Catholic Inferiority Complex.**

Roman Empire, Augustine of Hippo, one of the church's greatest theologians and thinkers, presented his interpretation of Psalm 59 in his masterwork, *City of God*. He argued there that *the Jews, alone of all the religious minorities within the newly Christian state, should be unimpeded in*





*their religious practice.* Why did the Jews merit this unique exemption? Because, said Augustine, their religious practices devolved from a unique author: God the Father. The same god whom Christians worshiped was himself the source of Jewish Scripture, Jewish tradition, and Jewish practice. *Thus God himself, Augustine insisted, wanted the Jews to remain Jews.* Let them preserve their ancient books, he urged; let them live openly according to their ancestral practices while scattered among the Christian majority. In so doing, Augustine taught, the Jews performed a valuable service of testimony for the church (emphasis added).

Ms. Fredriksen then quotes a paragraph from Augustine's *City of God* as supporting documentation. The quote is cited by Ms. Fredriksen with three ellipses:

By the evidence of their own scriptures they bear witness for us that we have not fabricated the prophecies about Christ. . . . It follows that when the Jews do not believe in our scriptures, their scriptures are fulfilled in them, while they read them with blind eyes. . . . It is in order to give this testimony which, in spite of themselves, they supply for our benefit by their possession and preservation of those books [of the Old Testament] that they are themselves

dispersed among all nations, wherever the Christian church spreads. . . . Hence the prophecy in the Book of Psalms: 'Slay them not, lest they forget your law; scatter them by your might.'

First, we must assume that Ms. Fredriksen believes this quote from Augustine is the single strongest passage that proves her thesis, since she offers no other quote for support, at least in this particular article for *US News*. The quote comes from Book 18, Chapter 46 of the *City of God*. The entire chapter reads as follows (I will italicize the pertinent lines):

But the Jews who slew Him, and would not believe in Him, because it behooved Him to die and rise again, were yet more miserably wasted by the Romans, and utterly rooted out from their kingdom, where aliens had al-

ready ruled over them, and were dispersed through the lands (so that indeed there is no place where they are not), and are thus *by their own Scriptures a testimony to us that we have not forged the prophecies about Christ.* And very many of them, considering this, even before His passion, but chiefly after His resurrection, believed on Him, of whom it was predicted, "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant shall be saved." But the rest are blinded, of whom it was predicted, "Let their table be made before them a trap, and a retribution, and a stumbling-block. Let their eyes be darkened lest they see, and bow down their back always." *Therefore, when they do not believe our Scriptures, their own, which they blindly read, are fulfilled in them, lest perchance any one should say that the Christians have forged these prophecies about Christ which are quoted under the name of the sibyl, or of others, if such there be, who do not belong to the Jewish people. For us, indeed, those suffice which are quoted from the books of our enemies, to whom we make our acknowledgment, on account of this testimony which, in spite of themselves, they contribute by their possession of these books, while they themselves are dispersed among all nations, wherever the Church of Christ is spread abroad. For a prophecy about this thing was sent before in the Psalms, which they also read, where it is written, "My God, His mercy shall prevent me. My God hath shown me concerning mine enemies, that Thou shalt not slay them, lest they*



*should at last forget Thy law: disperse them in Thy might."* Therefore God has shown the Church in her enemies the Jews *the grace of His compassion, since, as saith the apostle, "their offence is the salvation of the Gentiles."* And therefore He has not slain them, that is, He has not let the knowledge that they are Jews be lost in them, although they have been conquered by the Romans, lest they should forget the law of God, and their testimony should be of no avail in this matter of which we treat. But it was not enough that he should say, "Slay them not, lest they should at last forget Thy law," unless he had also added, "Disperse them;" *because if they had only been in their own land with that testimony of the Scriptures, and not every where, certainly the Church which is everywhere*

be also understood of the Jews." Be that as it may, one can easily see from reading the context of Augustine's statements on Psalm 59 from both *The City of God* and *Commentary on the Psalms* that we are hard pressed to see him doing what Ms. Fredriksen claims he is doing. Despite Ms. Fredriksen's gratuitous word choice on what Augustine extracts from Psalm 59 (e.g., Augustine "gave the Hebrews a privileged place in Christian society," or "the Jews, alone of all the religious minorities. . . should be unimpeded in their religious practice," or "their religious practices devolved from a unique author: God the Father," and "God himself. . . wanted the Jews to remain Jews," or "Augustine's. . . teaching on the Jews' special status," which are all stated on just one page of her

God as an adjunct religion to Christianity. This is not unlike the conclusions we hear from Ms. Fredriksen's ideological colleagues today (e.g., Amy Jill Levine, John Pawlikowski, Eugene Fisher, Mary C. Boys, Rabbi David Rosen, and many others). As such, we now have a clearer picture why Ms. Fredriksen chose the subtitle: "A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism" for she wishes to implant in her reader's mind that Christian doctrine, at least if one looks at it through the pioneering eyes of her new and improved Augustine, defends Judaism as a genuine and viable religion, for it is required to do so because Judaism "devolved from a unique author: God the Father" who is "the same god (sic) whom Christians worshiped."

What, in fact, Ms. Fredriksen has done is turn Augustine's reluctant concession to the Jews into an unconditional commitment to them. But if one reads carefully, and in context, Augustine's remarks in both the *City of God* and his *Commentary on the Psalms* they show only that he believes God allows unbelieving Jews (which is the vast majority of Jews) to exist purely for the sake of Christianity, not for the sake of "Jews as Jews," nor to extend, legitimize, or encourage Judaism in the Christian era. As we will see later in other quotes, Augustine is clear in his writings that Judaism is a dead religion and that the only way Jews can have any spiritual hope is if they accept Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church. In fact, the italicized portions above make it quite clear that the only real value Augustine sees in God allowing the rebellious Jews to exist (not includ-

## **"Thus God himself, Augustine insisted, wanted the Jews to remain Jews."**

*could not have had them as witnesses among all nations to the prophecies which were sent before concerning Christ.*

First, if we look at the actual verses and a little context from Psalm 59:10-16 upon which Augustine is commenting, we see that Psalm 59 is actually referring to "the nations" who are the enemies of the Psalmist, not the Jews, *per se*. But Augustine explains in his commentary, ". . . this indeed may

three-page article — later calling the Jews "history's Pole Star, a continuing quotidian revelation of God's will shining in the darkness of secular time" on page 3), she makes it appear as if Augustine had such a high esteem for the Jews that he was compelled to sanction Judaism as a divinely legitimized religion in and of itself. In effect, Ms. Fredriksen transforms Augustine's brief commentary on Psalm 59 into a thesis holding that Judaism survives under the hand of



ing the remnant of Jews coming to salvation in Christ) is that they, in their religion of Judaism, continue to preserve God's testimony against them in the books of the Old Testament, a preservation God is happy to use for his own advantage in order to: (a) increase the authenticity of the Christian religion which draws from the Old Testament in its testimony to the nations about the coming of Christ, and (b) to prove from the Old Testament why both the Jews and Judaism were rejected by God in favor of Christianity. We might say, in fact, that Augustine has few qualms about portraying God as 'using' the Jews (in the pejorative sense) to accomplish his judgment against the Jews. God allows the Jew to continue to exist not because he favors the Jews at large or sees spiritual value in Judaism as a God-glorifying religion, but because the Jew possesses something that is indispensable in vindicating God against the Jew — the Old Testament Scriptures which condemn them for their sins. Analogously, we might say that God punishes the Jew by making him carry the condemnation of Scripture like a ball and chain to whatever land he goes. This is not unusual for the God of Scripture. There are numerous instances in which he uses the sin and rebellion of the people to accomplish his will, but punishes the same people with their own sin while his will is being accomplished.

Unfortunately, we barely get glimpses of this darker side of the saga from the pen of Ms. Fredriksen. Similar to many authors today who defend Judaism as a viable and God-glorifying reli-

gion (e.g., David Klinghoffer's *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus*; Max Dimont's *Jews, God and History*; Aaron Milavec's *Salvation is from the Jews*; George Gilder's: *The Israel Test*, and many others), Ms. Fredriksen fails to make even one mention of the notorious and sinful history of the Jews that can be found in flipping just a few pages of the Old Testament. In fact, the heinous sins of the Jews is the very reason that the Psalmist is writing Psalm 59. It is why he wishes that despite the seeming temporary plea to "slay them not" in verses 11 or 12 (verse 11 in the Hebrew and verse 12 in the LXX), he insists immediately in the next verses that God should "consume them in wrath, consume them till they are no more," which seems somewhat contradictory and which may have led the New American Bible to translate the previous verse as "slay them" instead of "slay them not," and actually makes more sense in light of verse 13-14's plea for their destruction.<sup>ii</sup>

Additionally, the only apparent reason the Psalmist asks God to "slay them not" is not for the purpose of showing mercy to the Jews at large but, as he says "lest my people forget." The phrase "my people" intimates that the sole purpose of not slaying the wicked is to show a vivid sign to the Psalmist's people (i.e., the faithful Jews or nations) of how God punishes sinners without taking their lives.

This in itself is an important point in the exegesis of Psalm 59 since Ms. Fredriksen is under the impression that the clause in question applies only to those who were "slain not," and, more importantly, she does not attempt to correct or

even question Augustine's approach to the verse. It would have helped if Ms. Fredriksen had examined the Hebrew of Psalm 59 (which would have been Jerome's preference) as opposed to merely quoting the Septuagint (LXX) that Augustine used.<sup>iii</sup> The LXX says: "Slay them not, lest they forget your law,"<sup>iv</sup> whereas the Hebrew says: "Do not slay them lest my people forget. . ."<sup>v</sup> The difference between the two is the LXX's use of "they" as opposed to the adjectival pronoun "my" used in the Hebrew; as well as the LXX's addition of "forget your law" whereas the Hebrew merely has "forget," yet this is not true with every LXX translation.<sup>vi</sup> The Hebrew makes a distinction between "them" and "my," thus referring to two different sets of people, whereas the LXX connects "them" with "they" thus referring to the same people with the same law. Quite a difference.

This problem is further compounded by the fact that Augustine didn't know Hebrew and rarely used it, but he didn't know Greek much better, only acquiring a reading knowledge of it very late in his career. As such, we must posit that Augustine was in no position to make a definitive exegesis of Psalm 59:11-12, especially since Ms. Fredriksen is seeking to use it as not only the definitive passage that shows a change in Augustine's view of the Jews, but the sole passage that leads Augustine in that direction. How Ms. Fredriksen can make such claims without addressing these exegetical contingencies, contingencies that would not only affect Augustine's view of Psalm 59:11-12 but Ms. Fredriksen's



overall understanding of Augustine's view of the Jews, is quite surprising for a scholar of her reputation.

Of course, coming from the liberal school of theology, Ms. Fredriksen wouldn't see the Hebrew as the correct text over against the LXX because, as a rule, these scholars do not believe the Hebrew was divinely inspired, but that both the Hebrew and the LXX were products only of the human author. In the beginning of the chapter in her book titled "Slay Then Not," Ms. Fredriksen notes that Augustine and Jerome sparred about the relevance of the LXX, but she fails to state that Jerome's allegiance to the Hebrew was based on the fact that he, and the Church with him, held it as divinely inspired, whereas the same parties held the LXX as merely a translation created by 70 Alexandrian

opposition to the consensus of Fathers who understood it as six days. Additionally, Augustine's use of the LXX in Malachi 4, which has "Elijah the Tishbite" instead of only "Elijah" found in the Hebrew text, led Augustine to think that, because the word "Tishbite" was specified it meant that the actual Elijah must come from heaven to earth, causing him to sidestep Jesus' affirmation that the Elijah of Malachi 4 was merely John the Baptist (cf. Mal. 4:5; Matt 11:14). The truth is, Augustine was more often a better theologian than he was an exegete of Scripture. As noted, he did not know the original languages of Scripture, but without them it is very difficult to know precisely what a given text is saying, especially if there is discrepancy or ambiguity.

Without these checks and balances in exegesis, we can see why

in their books, our witness" (p. 329), or in citing Augustine's remark from his book *Against the Jews* 7, 9 she says, per Augustine, that "the Jews never realize that what they carry is actually a covenant for the Gentiles, to whom they unknowingly minister" (p. 330). The problem is not so much with Augustine but what Ms. Fredriksen then parlays from Augustine's treatment of Psalm 59:11-12, such as, her intimation that if the Jews are not supposed to forget their law, then we might say that God wants the Jews, as Jews, to keep following the law not merely as "book carriers" for Christians but because Judaism itself is a God-ordained religion right alongside Christianity. It is difficult to relieve Ms. Fredriksen of such a bias when she spares no sprinkling in her article of such gratuitous remarks as: "Augustine gave the Hebrews a privileged place in Christian society," or "the Jews, alone of all the religious minorities. . . should be unimpeded in their religious practice," or "their religious practices devolved from a unique author: God the Father," and "God himself. . . wanted the Jews to remain Jews," or "Augustine's. . . teaching on the Jews' special status," or calling the Jews "history's Pole Star, a continuing quotidian revelation of God's will shining in the darkness of secular time." Later we will see that Ms. Fredriksen buttresses these far-reaching conclusions by claiming that Augustine ceases using the "Cain analogy" when categorizing the Jews and replaces it with the idea that Cain applies to both Christian and Jews who are, together under God's vigilance,

### **Ms. Fredriksen has turned Augustine's reluctant concession to the Jews into an unconditional commitment to them.**

Jewish scholars a few centuries before Christ of the original Hebrew texts of scripture. This would not be the first time that Augustine's allegiance to the LXX and his ignoring of the Hebrew would cause problems in biblical exegesis. It was his idiosyncratic use of the LXX's translation in Sirach 18:1, for example, that caused him to conclude that the creation account in Genesis 1 occurred in one day, in

Ms. Fredriksen, working off the LXX, has few qualms using Augustine's remarks on Psalm 59:11-12 to conclude that the Jews of whom the Psalmist says "slay them not" are the same Jews who might "forget their law." But the problem is not so much with Augustine's use of the LXX, for as even Ms. Fredriksen admits, Augustine merely says that the Jews, "in their hearts they are our enemy;





marked strangers on earth, which, she says, Augustine develops in *The City of God*.

But before we get to that, let's examine the remainder of Psalm 59. The Psalmist prays that God would "make them totter" and "bring them down" (Hebrew of verse 11). He says they are like "howling dogs prowling about the city" (Hebrew of verse 14). These are certainly not flattering pictures of the Jews. If anything, the Psalmist wishes to portray them as vagabonds who are allowed to survive only because they will serve as object lessons of disgrace and punishment to God's faithful people. St. Paul did much

Jews' "destruction" in verse 13 (14), both in the LXX and the Hebrew but even stronger in the LXX: "And for their cursing and falsehood shall utter destruction be announced, they shall fall by the wrath of utter destruction, and shall not be. . ."vii Ms. Fredriksen never explains how this verse jibes with her claims that verses 11-12 teach an indefinite sparing of the Jews.

As far as we can tell from Ms. Fredriksen's article and book, the Jews, merely because they are Jews, are to have a "special status" and a "privileged place in Christian society." Ms. Fredriksen, ignoring the

the same with the Christians in the budding Church of the first century when he cited examples from the Old Testament of God's wrath upon the sinful Jews and warned the Christians that the same could happen to them if they rebelled against God (cf. 1Co 10:1-12; Rm 15:14; Heb 3:1-4:16). Additionally, Ms. Fredriksen must deal with the clear image of calling for the

context of Psalm 59, tries desperately to squeeze out a flattering picture of the Jews whereas a face value reading of the text, as well as Augustine's additional comments on this Psalm and the Jews elsewhere, teaches that the only "special status" that unbelieving Jews have is the ignominious privilege of being allowed to exist for the sole purpose of possessing something that is of value to God for the advancement of Christianity. How could God be expected to do less? Judaism is a religion which, at its core, rejects the very God of Christianity, Jesus Christ. How could Judaism have a "privileged place in Christian society" when its religion fits the description, as St. John says in his epistles, of "every spirit that does not confess Jesus is from God, and this is the spirit of the antichrist" (1 John 4:3)? This is the elephant in the room of ecumenical "dialogue" that everyone is staring at but few want to admit is staring back at them with a jaundiced eye, including Ms. Fredriksen.

## OTHER BOOKS

In other books of Augustine's he reveals precisely the same motivation for his understanding of why God has allowed the unbelieving Jews to exist. From the context of his remarks we can easily see that it is not Augustine's purpose to flatter the Jews or to give them a divine status above other peoples, but to remind them of just how evil they were in their past history and that their existence at large today has nothing to do with their claims to personal virtue or religious merit.



In his reply to Faustus the Manichean, Augustine writes:

In view of the multitudes from all nations who have become zealous believers in these books, it is laughably absurd to tell us that it is impossible to persuade a Gentile to learn the Christian faith from Jewish books. Indeed, it is a great confirmation of our faith that *such important testimony is borne by enemies*. The believing Gentiles cannot suppose these testimonies to Christ to be recent forgeries; for they find them in books held sacred for so many ages by those who crucified Christ, and still regarded with the highest veneration by those who every day blaspheme Christ. If the prophecies of Christ were the production of the preachers of Christ, we might suspect their genuineness. But now the preacher expounds the text of the blasphemer. In this way

were to preach Christ to the world should be thought to have forged the prophecies which speak of Christ as to be born, to work miracles, to suffer unjustly, to die, to rise again, to ascend to heaven, to publish the gospel of eternal life among all nations, *the unbelief of the Jews has been made of signal benefit to us*; so that those who do not receive in their heart for their own good these truths, carry, in their hands for our benefit the writings in which these truths are contained. And *the unbelief of the Jews increases rather than lessens the authority of the books, for this blindness is itself, foretold*. They testify to the truth by their not understanding it. By *not understanding the books which predict that they would not understand, they prove these books to be true* (*Reply to Faustus*, Book 16, No. 21, emphasis added).

He died for us. In the book of Wisdom it is prophesied of the Jews: "Let us condemn him to an ignominious death; for he will be proved in his words. If he is truly the Son of God, He will aid him; and deliver him from the hand of his enemies. Thus they thought, and erred; for their wickedness blinded them." These words apply also to those who, in spite of all these evidences, in spite of such a series of prophecies, and of their fulfillment, still deny that Christ is foretold in the Scriptures. *As often as they repeat this denial, we can produce fresh proofs, with the help of Him who has made such provision against human perversity*, that proofs already given need not be repeated. (*Reply to Faustus*, Book 12, No. 43, emphasis added).

One of the main reasons Augustine raises these arguments is that Faustus, like Marcion, believed that the Old Testament should be rejected. Augustine writes of Faustus as follows:

Faustus said: "Why do we not receive the Old Testament? Because when a vessel is full, what is poured on it is not received, but allowed to run over; and a full stomach rejects what it cannot hold. So the Jews, satisfied with the Old Testament, reject the New; and we who have received the New Testament from Christ, reject the Old. You receive both because you are only half filled with each, and the one is not completed, but corrupted by the other" (*Reply to Faustus*, Book 15, No. 1).

**Augustine teaches that the only "special status" that unbelieving Jews have is the ignominious privilege of being allowed to exist for the advancement of Christianity.**

*the Most High God orders the blindness of the ungodly for the profit of the saint, in His righteous government bringing good out of evil that those who by their own choice live wickedly may be, in His just judgment, made the instruments of His will.* So, lest those that

Earlier in the same book he says:

For among all their anointed ones the Jews looked for one who was to save them. But in the mysterious justice of God they were blinded; and thinking only of the power of the Messiah, they did not understand His weakness, in which



Augustine also defends the use of the Old Testament via the Jews in his *Treatise Against the Pelagians*:

Of that same kind were they who crucified the Lord, and continued in the same unbelief. Thence there are still their children in the great multitude of the Jews, although now the New Testament as it was prophesied is made plain and confirmed by the blood of Christ; and the gospel is made known from the river where He was baptized and began His teachings, even to the ends of the earth. *And these Jews, according to the prophecies which they read, are dispersed everywhere over all the earth, that even from their writings may not be wanting a testimony to Christian truth.* (*Treatise Against the Two Letters of the Pelagians*, Book 3, Ch. 9, emphasis added).

He argues the same way in his *Sermons*:

Mark now the time of the New Testament, consider well the nation of the Jews, thou wilt find it as a dry fleece; whereas the whole world, like that floor, is full of grace, not hidden, but manifested. Wherefore we are forced exceedingly to bewail our brethren, who strive not against hidden, but against open and manifested grace. There is allowance for the Jews. (*Sermon* 81, 9).

Commenting on various other Psalms, Augustine makes the same argument: *we bring forth the books of the Jews*. The Jews forsooth are our enemies, *from an enemy's books convince we the adversary*. . . If any enemy clamor and say, "Ye for

yourselves have forged prophecies" be the books of the Jews brought forth, because the elder shall serve the younger. Therein let them read those predictions, which now we see fulfilled; and let us all say, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting, and all the people shall say, So be it, So be it." (*Homilies on the Psalms* 41, 13, emphasis added).

In another place, Augustine argues that the continued existence of the Jews is similar to the reason that St. Paul gives for God allowing the existence of heretics and heresies in the Church — to prove who is faithful in the Christian Church, not for the sake of the heretics: "although they differ among themselves, *whether as Jews and heretics, or as heretics of one kind or other, are still all useful to the Church, as being all alike servants, either in bearing witness to or in proving some truth*" (*Reply to Faustus*, Book 12, No. 24, emphasis added).

Similarly, in another place Augustine compares the Jews to Cain, the man who murdered his brother Abel but was spared with a mark to inhibit others from killing him:

But what does God reply? "Not so," He says; "but whosoever shall kill Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." That is, it is not as thou say; not by bodily death shall the ungodly race of carnal Jews perish. For whoever destroys them in this way shall suffer sevenfold vengeance, that is, shall bring upon himself the sevenfold penalty under which the Jews lie for the crucifixion of Christ. *So to the end of the seven days of time, the continued preservation of*

*the Jews will be a proof to believing Christians of the subjection merited by those who, in the pride of their kingdom, put the Lord to death.* (*Reply to Faustus*, Book 12, No. 12, emphasis added).

Interestingly enough, Ms. Fredriksen argues late in her book that Cain, "Augustine's premier biblical figure for the Jews, is suddenly strangely absent. What happened to Cain? Where did he go?" (p. 331); "Cain drops out when Augustine quotes Psalm 59:12 only in his two later, undated sermons" (p. 347). For Ms. Fredriksen the reason is: ". . . by the time that he found Psalm 59, he did not need it. . . Only within the specific context of the latter half of the *City of God* did Augustine finally relinquish Cain as a type of the Jews" (p. 349). Did he? Ms. Fredriksen offers us no direct statement from Augustine saying that he dropped Cain, nor a statement saying that he adopted Psalm 59 in lieu of Cain. How could he, since in both Psalm 59 and the Cain narrative the transgressor is spared immediate death despite his wickedness? The only logic Ms. Fredriksen offers for her assertion is: "I think that this is so because Augustine delivered them [the two sermons] only after he had conceived and become committed to his vision in *City of God*" (p. 347). How Ms. Fredriksen can arrive at such a firm conclusion when she doesn't even know the date of these two sermons is surprising, especially when she later admits that although "Cain makes no appearance. . . all of Augustine's earlier ideas that he had developed against Faustus are



there: the missing kingdom, the visible practices, the permanent blindness, the unwitting servitude. . .” (p. 347). To say the least, she gives us a very confusing and meandering understanding of just what Augustine believed regarding the Jews.

Perhaps the reason Ms. Fredriksen feels justified in putting Psalm 59 on a higher level of divine commitment to the Jews than what the Cain analogy has to offer is that she has ignored the context of Psalm 59 (which, as we have seen above, eventually calls for the destruction of those who were previously spared). Instead she focuses on one statement “Slay them not” as the fulcrum upon which everything else must rest; and she does so without even the slightest investigation into the textual discrepancies that are rampant in these verses. I would have hoped that this kind of one-verse proof-texting would be confined to biblical fanatics, not hopefully, among the professional ranks with whom Ms. Fredriksen normally associates.

## THE PROBLEM

As noted previously, the problem is not so much with what Augustine does with Psalm 59 (however limited he was in his allegiance to the LXX) but what Ms. Fredriksen concludes from Augustine. Later she attempts to combine Augustine’s remarks on Psalm 59 with Augustine’s recognition of the value of the flesh over against Faustus’ rejection of the same and concludes that these two concepts “provided him with a way to regard contemporary Jewish observance as

God-given, as God-protected, and as good for the Church. By wanting to value ‘flesh’ positively, Augustine came to value ‘Jew’ and ‘Judaism’ positively” (p. 339). The problem with these kinds of statements is that they seek to exploit the positive side of the double-entendre in phrases such as “God-given” and “God-protected” at the expense of the negative. Even Satan’s existence is “God-given” and “God-protected” and even “good for the Church,” since God uses Satan to accomplish his will, but in the larger scheme of things, Satan is the worst evil ever known to mankind. We are at a loss to see these crucial distinctions from Ms. Fredriksen.

Regardless of those implications, Augustine’s supposed elimination of the Cain analogy in his two “undated sermons” is only the first ‘argument from silence’ that Ms. Fredriksen commandeers in attempting to prove her point about the Jews’ ongoing divinely-appointed status and privilege, awaiting a second argument later in her article and book in which Augustine’s silence will again be used to garner favor toward the Jews. As Ms. Fredriksen sees it: “Restated in biblical idiom, this idea defines the difference between Israel and the nations. . . And here, as he argued against Faustus, Christians and Jews formed one community over against pagans and heretics, because (true) Christians, like Jews, worshiped the One God” (p. 351). This is hardly the case for Augustine. Never once does he speak of Jews having a place alongside Christianity, much less does he ever commit himself to saying that they “worship the One

God.” How could he? Augustine knows that the Judaism of his day rejected Jesus Christ outright, God in the flesh. Certainly the Jews of the Old Testament, such as Abraham and Moses, worshiped the “One God,” but not the Jews in Augustine’s day who rejected Jesus Christ. Jesus was clear in his teaching to the Jews that if the Jews rejected Jesus they also rejected the Father, the very Father they previously thought of as “the One God” (Jn 8:1-59). But nowhere in her article or book does Ms. Fredriksen make these crucial distinctions. Instead, she makes Augustine a friend of Christ-rejecting Jews, and even against the consensus of his own Catholic Church.

Looking at Augustine’s other comments, in his *Treatise on the Priesthood*, Augustine argues from a slightly different perspective, but a perspective that is highly valuable for us today since he seeks to give balance to the “Old Covenant is not revoked” controversy of which so many are confused today when he writes that : “*Jews so revere the Law, that although the time has come which annuls it, they still contend for the observance of all its contents, contrary to the purpose of God*” (*Treatise on the Priesthood*, Book 1, 4, emphasis added).

All in all, Augustine’s description of the Jews is not the least bit flattering. Except for the remnant that Augustine anticipates will convert to the Christian faith, the unbelieving Jews’ existence is tolerated even as wicked Gentiles or demons are tolerated until the end of time. It is certainly not anything close to the positive image that Ms. Fredriksen seeks to portray, in addition to her attempt in recent ar-



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ticles and books to claim that the Jews had little if anything to do with the death of Christ, placing the blame and guilt solely on the Romans. To that conclusion, Augustine says the following, even in the City of God which she believes offers Augustine's alternative view of the Jews:

The Jews were possessed by devils, and devoured; for in the place of Calvary, crucifying Christ, and lifting on the Cross, they said as it were with childish sense, not understanding what they said, "Go up, thou bald head." For what is, "Go up"? "Crucify Him, Crucify Him" (*Homilies on the Psalms* 45, 1).

Such was the founder of the earthly city. He was also a figure of the Jews who slew Christ the Shepherd of the flock of men, prefigured by Abel the shepherd of sheep (*City of God*, Book 15, Ch. 7).

Because the Jews did triumph, when they saw Christ crucified; they thought that they had fulfilled their will to do Him hurt: the fruits of their cruelty they saw in effect, Christ hanging on the Cross (*Homilies on the Psalms*, 41, 12).

... was the case when the Lord was crucified through the cruelty and impiety of the Jews (*City of God*, Book 3, Ch. 15).

For we both honor the passion of Christ as accomplished for us, and we hate the crime of the Jews who crucified Him (*City of God*, Book 16, Ch 2).

What the disciples who loved Him saw, saw also the Jews who crucified Him (*Tractate on John*, 14, 3, 12).

There we find that on the fourth day of the week the Jews took counsel to put the Lord to death (*Letters*, 36, 13, 30).

Also, in another place: "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He had not only broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God" (*Letters*, 74, 4, 14).

What is this but that He puts Himself for the Jews, of whose nation He was, who were troubled with great anger and crucified Christ, when He, mindful of mercy, said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do?" (*City of God*, Book 18, Ch. 32).

But as we say to the Jews, You killed Christ, although it was their parents who did so, so these persons shall grieve that they in some sort did what their progenitors did (*City of God*, Book 20, Ch. 30).

As for Judaism, or even the Judaized version of Christianity that some Jews were promoting (the favorite target of John Chrysostom in his book *Against the Jews*, from which many Jews and liberal Catholics today accuse him of "anti-semitism"), Augustine has this to say:

"For 'salvation is of the Jews' [John 4:22] is nothing else

than that Christ is of the Jews" (*On Psalm* 45, 10).

As regards the worship of the Almighty God, you might call us a schism of the Jews, for all Jews are bold enough to profess this worship, were it not for the difference in the form of our worship, though it may be questioned whether the Jews really worship the Almighty (*Reply to Faustus*, Book 20, No 4).

For there is surely no proportion between the culpability of him who exhibits the various opinions held by the fathers in a commentary on Scripture, and the guilt of him who reintroduces within the Church a most pestilential heresy. If, however, there is for us no alternative but to receive the Jews into the Church, along with the usages prescribed by their law; if, in short, it shall be declared lawful for them to continue in the Churches of Christ what they have been accustomed to practice in the synagogues of Satan, I will tell you my opinion of the matter: they will not become Christians, but they will make us Jews (*Letters* 74, Ch. 4, No 13).

So the unbelieving people of the Jews is cursed from the earth, that is, from the Church, which in the confession of sins has opened its mouth to receive the blood shed for the remission of sins by the hand of the people that would not be under grace, but under the law. And this murderer is cursed by the Church; that is, the Church admits and



avows the curse pronounced by the apostle: "Whoever are of the works of the law are under the curse of the law" (*Reply to Faustus*, Book 12, No. 11).

## JEWISH RITUAL

As for Jewish ritual, Augustine had the same balanced view as St. Paul. On the one hand, if some new Jewish Christians wanted to engage in some harmless Jewish ritual, Augustine conceded to it out of tolerance. On the other hand, he was adamant that no Christian could ever be required to take part in these rituals. This is in contrast to Ms. Fredriksen's repeated assertions in her book that Paul, Peter, James and the other apostles "continued to live as observant Jews" (p. 291) or that these apostles were just like "Jesus [who] had lived his life as a pious and Law-observant Jew" (p. 301), when there is no such evidence in the New Testament, except for one or two instances, one of which Paul circumcises Timothy, but this circumcision is not because there is any evidence that Paul is an "observant Jew" but only for the purpose of placating the Jews he intends to evangelize who would feel more comfortable speaking to Paul if his companion Timothy were circumcised. Only in this limited way only does the New Testament offer any instances in which Paul "became a Jew to the Jews" (cf. 1Cor 9:20; Gal 2:10-16; 5:1-4). Furthermore, Jesus was on the Old Testament side of the cross when Jewish ritual was demanded of Jews, but

Paul and Peter were in a time when the Old Covenant was revoked and the ritual became obsolete and meaningless (cf. Heb 7:18; 8:1-13; 10:9; Col 2:15-16; Eph 2:15). Ms. Fredriksen provides none of these crucial distinctions. As for Augustine, he writes:

This party, therefore, endeavoring to raise odium and persecution against him, charged him with being an enemy of the law and of the divine institutions; and there was no more fitting way in which he could turn aside the odium caused by this false accusation, than by himself celebrating those rites which he was supposed to condemn as profane, and thus showing that, on the one hand, the Jews were not to be debarred from them as if they were unlawful, and on the other hand, that the Gentiles were not to be compelled to observe them as if they were necessary (Letter 81, 2, 9).

And I now, as speaking in the sight of God, beseech you by the law of charity to believe me when I say with my whole heart, that it never was my opinion that in our time, Jews who become Christians were either required or at liberty to observe in any manner, or from any motive whatever, the ceremonies of the ancient dispensation (Letters 81, 2, 17).

Lastly, Ms. Fredriksen tries to make a case that Augustine believed the Jews were in a different theological category than heretics or schismatics, and it is this thesis that serves as the backbone of her view that Augustine was partial to

the Jews. But Ms. Fredriksen realizes this thesis is difficult to prove and thus she must avoid "what Augustine says about theological and rhetorical Jews" for it "cannot be read as direct evidence to help us settle this question," rather, she must, by her own admission, resort to "something that he does not say." As we noted with Augustine's supposed dropping of the Cain analogy, Ms. Fredriksen must rely on an argument from silence, but to her it is at least a big silence.

As she sees it, there were three distinct and important episodes Augustine experienced, which when compared and contrasted with each other, lean him toward viewing the Jews differently than heretics and schismatics. The textual evidence militates against this interpretation. In Augustine's writings we find a lack of distinction between pagans, heretics and Jews by the frequent times he lumped them all together, as in this passage from his Sermons:

Now ye may know, Dearly Beloved, that these unite their murmurings with Heretics and with Jews. *Heretics, Jews, and Heathens* have made a unity against Unity. Because it has happened, that in some places the Jews have received chastisement because of their wickednesses; they charge and suspect us, or pretend, that we are always seeking the like treatment for them. Again, because it has happened that the heretics in some places have suffered the penalty of the laws for the impiety and fury of their deeds of violence; they say immediately that we are seeking by every means some harm for their destruction.



(Sermons, 12, 18, emphasis added).

It is plain then that the Holy Ghost is blasphemed both *by Pagans, and by Jews, and by heretics*. Are they then to be left, and accounted without all hope, since the sentence is fixed," Whosoever speaketh a word against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come"? and are they only to be deemed free from the guilt of this most grievous sin who are Catholics from infancy? For all those who have believed the word of God, that they might become Catholics, came surely into the grace and peace of Christ, either from among *the Pagans, or Jews, or heretics*: and if there be no pardon for them for the word which they have spoken against the Holy Ghost, in vain do we promise and preach to men, to turn to God, and receive peace and remission of sins, whether in Baptism or in the Church. For it is not said, "It shall not be forgiven him except in baptism;" but, "it shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, neither in the world to come" (*Sermon 21, 6, emphasis added*).

He says much the same in his book *On Patience*, only here he separates converted Jews from carnal Jews:

So then, as we are not to deny that this is the gift of God, we are thus to understand that there be some gifts of God possessed by the sons of that Jerusalem which is above, and free, and mother of us all, (for these are in some sort the

hereditary possessions in which we are "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ:") but some other which may be received even by the sons of concubines to whom *carnal Jews and schismatics or heretics* are compared. (On *Patience*, 25, emphasis added)

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## JEWS, PAGANS, HERETICS

In his book, *On the Trinity*, Augustine is even more direct:

...works of mercy are of no profit, *either to Pagans, or to Jews who do not believe in Christ, or to any heretics or schismatics* whatsoever in whom faith and charity and sober holiness are not found. (On *the Trinity*, 12, 7, 11, emphasis added)

Finally, Augustine made the same lumping together of Jews, pagans and heretics in his commentary on Psalm 110:

And what wonder if He shall then rule, when the righteous reign with Him forever, and the ungodly burn with eternal punishments? What wonder, if He shall then? Now "in the midst of Thine enemies," now in this transition of ages, in this propagation and succession of human mortality, now while the torrent of time is gliding by, unto this is the rod of Thy power sent out of Sion, "that Thou mayest be Ruler in the midst of Thine enemies." Rule Thou, rule among *pagans, Jews, heretics, false brethren*. Rule Thou, rule, O Son of David, Lord of David, rule in the midst of *pagans, Jews, heretics, false brethren*. "Be Thou Ruler in the midst of

Thine enemies." We understand not this verse aright, if we do not see that it is already going on (*Homilies on the Psalms*, 110, 6, emphasis added).

In the end, Ms. Fredriksen's thesis fails on all counts. We can safely conclude that on the question of the Jews, Augustine was not "alone among his peers" nor did he "give the Hebrews a privileged place in Christian society." He did not see synagogues as taken from "pages of the Bible" nor did he view the Jews as "history's Pole Star...shining in the darkness." Rather, as is clear from the variety of his books we have shown above, Augustine viewed the Jews as darkness that needed to come to the light due to their many sins and heresies. Augustine was very clear that the Jews' present existence was tolerated by God for the purpose of authenticating the Christian religion and serving as a sign of his continuing judgment against the Jews. Jews, like all unbelieving men in the world, are given a certain amount of time to repent of these sins and accept God's graces through Jesus Christ.

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## ROBERT SUNGENIS

Notes Available Upon Request



the divorce, but, as he puts it, "my wife went with my son to consult some orthodox Jews, whose advice she thought she could trust and they recommended her to press at once for a divorce, and on no account to let my son remain with me."

So much for rabbis supporting "the sanctity of the family." When Maimon refused to go through with the divorce, "the presiding judge became furious, began to call me names, pronounced me a damnable heretic, and cursed me in the name of the Lord" (p. 142).

Before this travesty continues any further, the pope should sit down with his advisers and analyze the possible outcomes of any future visits to synagogues and, along with that, the future of Catholic Jewish dialogue in general. As Woody Hayes used to say, three things can happen when you pass the ball, and two of them are bad. The odds involving the successful outcome of Catholic-Jewish dialogue are about the same. The pope has indicated his concern for the Jewish people. If that is the case, why does he insist on speaking exclusively to rabbis? In what sense do they represent the interests of the Jewish people? If the testimony of Solomon Maimon, Nathanael Kapner, and the Coen brothers means anything, the rabbis are the oppressors of the Jewish people, not representatives of their interests. By entering into dialogue with the rabbis, the pope is turning his back on Jews like Brother Nathanael Kaplan. If he doubts my word on this, the pope would do well to consult no less an authority than Abe Foxman, head of the ADL, who informed the American

bishops, after their repudiation of the Keeler Statement, that dialogue and conversion were mutually exclusive alternatives.

It's difficult to disagree with Foxman. But if that's the case, which path is the pope going to choose? If he continues down the path of dialogue, he will willy nilly deny the Gospel by refusing to preach it to Jews like Larry Gopnik because giving up the conversion option is the *conditio sine qua non* of dialogue. If the pope chooses both dialogue with the rabbis and proselytism with the less important Jews, he runs the risk of being seen as a hypocrite. The church cannot deny the Gospel, and she cannot tolerate double standards. The only viable option for the pope is the option exercised by the first pope, St. Peter, who told the Jews in Jerusalem, "Jesus the Nazarene was a man commended to you by God. . . . You killed him, but God raised him to life." "Cut to the heart" by what Peter said, the Jews asked Peter and the Apostles, "what must we do, brothers?" To which, Peter replied, "You must repent, and every one of you must be baptized."

Catholic/Jewish dialogue has become an empty ritual disconnected from both the reality which the Jewish people are forced to live under their despotic rabbis and the reality of the Catholic faith. It has become an idol, the worship of which is forbidden by the first commandment. Dialogue is another religion, one that undermines the clear testimony of the Gospel and delivers the great majority of the Jewish people into the hands of their oppressors. Adding insult to injury, the pope went on

to claim that one of the fruits of Catholic-Jewish dialogue was "a renewed respect for the Jewish interpretation of the Old Testament." *A Serious Man* is a work of fiction, but fiction in order to be compelling has to tell the truth. And the truth it told about the rabbis is that the Jewish interpretation of the Old Testament is conspicuous by its absence when it comes to counseling the Larry Gopniks of this world. Larry could have profited by reading the book of Job, but none of the rabbis felt it was relevant to his situation. If they had, they would have mentioned it.

In this regard, the Second Vatican Council's decree on the means of social communication, *Inter Mirifica*, might provide a helpful complement to *Nostra Aetate*, the Vatican II document on the Jews. The pope should take to heart the Council's praise of "new avenues of easy communication of all kinds of news, of ideas, and orientations." *Inter Mirifica* goes on to claim that the cinema, "if . . . properly used. . . can be of considerable benefit to mankind."

So, if next year this time, the pope feels tempted to submit himself and the Church he represents to more abuse from the rabbis by visiting another synagogue, he should think twice. Rather than inflict more damage on the Larry Gopniks of the world, he should give Walter Cardinal Kasper a call, and the two of them should watch *A Serious Man* instead.

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**E. MICHAEL JONES**



# Bullets

\* The surprise isn't so much that the Republican National Committee paid for donors' visits to a lesbian bondage club; rather, the surprise is that the media or Democrats object.

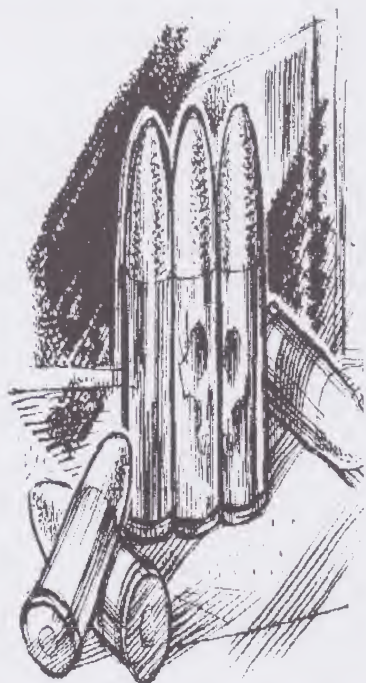
\* Does the *NY Times* want the Church to exhume and then defrock Fr. Lawrence Murphy, the Milwaukee priest who sexually abused deaf children decades ago and who died in the 1990s? Maybe his bones should be crushed and scattered?

\* "I've been wondering," writes the *NY Times*' Maureen Dowd, "given the vitriolic reaction of the New York archbishop to my column defending nuns and the dismissive reaction of the Vatican to my column denouncing the church's response to the pedophilia scandal, if they are able to take a woman's voice seriously." Maureen, the Church reveres Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Avila, and Therese of Lisieux as Doctors of the Church; it's you she doesn't take seriously.

\* The Countercultural Catholic. Actor Neal McDonough was replaced three days into filming ABC's *Scoundrels* because he refused to do sex scenes. A family man and a Catholic, he'd made it clear that he won't do them, which ABC knew.

\* A Serious Woman's Voice. When two dozen women bared their breasts and walked through Portland, Maine, to show the double standard by which women but not men are afraid to go topless, hundreds of gawkers showed up, often with cameras. "I'm really upset by the men," said organizer Ty MacDowell, "watching it like it's a parade." Perhaps she thought only lesbians would gawk.

\* Double Speak. Asked if he was willing to nominate a Supreme Court Justice who didn't support abortion rights, President Obama said he didn't have a "litmus test" but any nominee must respect "women's



rights" and "their privacy and their bodily integrity."

\* Unplanned Barrenhood? "Doctors in southern China are working around the clock to fulfil a government goal to sterilise — by force if necessary — almost 10,000 men and women who have violated birth control policies," reports London's *Times*. "Family planning authorities are so determined to stop couples from producing more children than the regulations allow that they are detaining the relatives of those who resist."

\* Democracy in Action. State Rep. Babette Josephs of Philly accused her primary opponent of pandering to LGBT voters by pretending to be bisexual. "I outed him as a straight person," Josephs said.

\* The Hidden Cost of War. *Army Times* reports that 18 veterans commit suicide each day. Attempts by Iraq and Afghanistan vets are "a key area of concern." In fiscal 2009, vets who served there attempted suicide 1,868 times; 98 succeeded.

\* During hearings on Goldman Sachs' role in the demise of the housing market, Senators repeatedly expressed shock that avarice exists on Wall Street. Duh.

\* Tolerance in Action. British bureaucrats organizing the Pope's visit to

**JAMES G. BRUEN, JR.**

E-Mail: [cwbullets@yahoo.com](mailto:cwbullets@yahoo.com)

England mockingly suggested he launch a brand of condoms and open an abortion clinic.

\* The American Board of Anesthesiologists will revoke the certification of a member who participates in an execution by lethal injection, because "we are healers, not executioners," said board secretary Mark Rockoff. And if they participate in an abortion?

\* "I would not presume to instruct you," wrote gay Episcopal bishop Vickie Gene Robinson in a *Washington Post* open letter to the pope. "That would be arrogant." He then arrogantly instructs the pope, "it is misguided and wrong for gay men to be scapegoated in this scandal." Don't lay "blame," he says, "at the feet of gay priests," because "psychologically healthy homosexual men" aren't "drawn to little boys." "Objectively disordered psychologically healthy men" is a contradiction, isn't it, bishop?

\* During a pre-draft interview, the NFL Miami Dolphins GM Jeff Ireland asked receiver Dez Bryant if his mother was a prostitute. Given media coverage of lifestyles of some NFL players, perhaps the team was looking for women to invite to parties?

\* The Catholic League's Bill Donohue questions whether the Pope should visit England, citing "ominous signs:" "over 100,000 Brits have signed 'certificates of de-baptism';" "hate-ridden atheists" are "paying anti-Catholic lawyers" to research "arresting the pope for 'crimes against humanity';" "Catholic bashing by the British media is flourishing;" and, "freedom of speech and freedom of religion are in a very tenuous state for Christians." If the early Church had adopted Donohue's approach, there'd have been no Age of Martyrs. St. Ignatius of Antioch, pray for us.

\* Visit Culture Wars online to order books, DVDs, and CDs.



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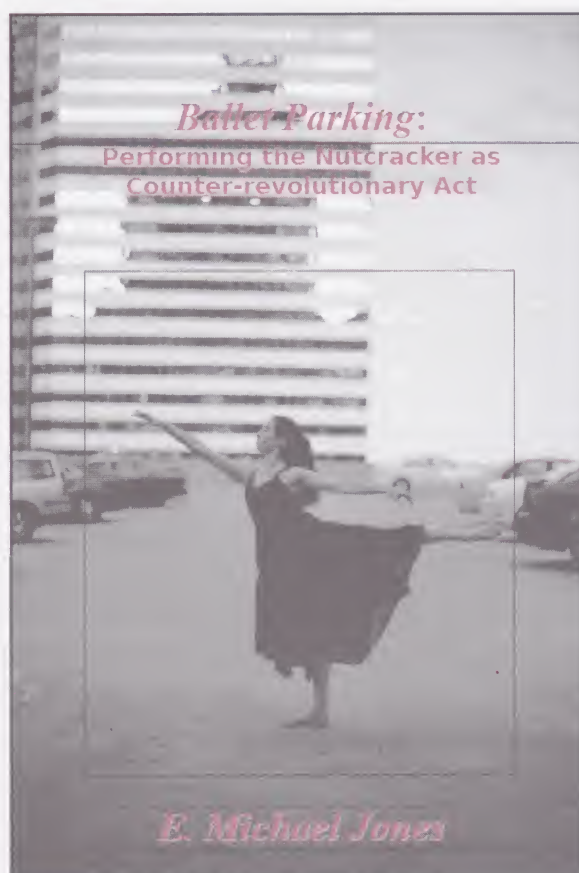
By E. Michael Jones

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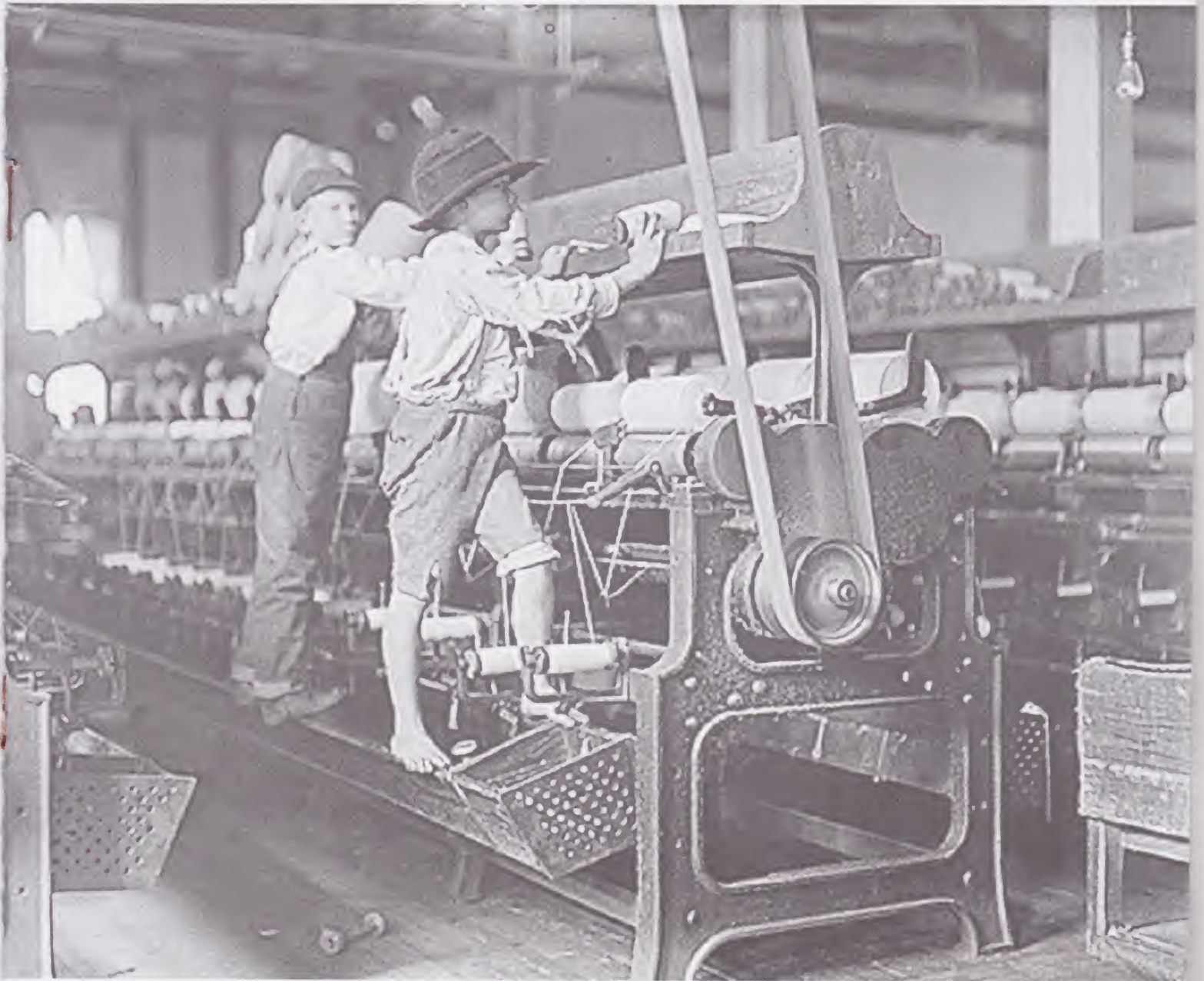
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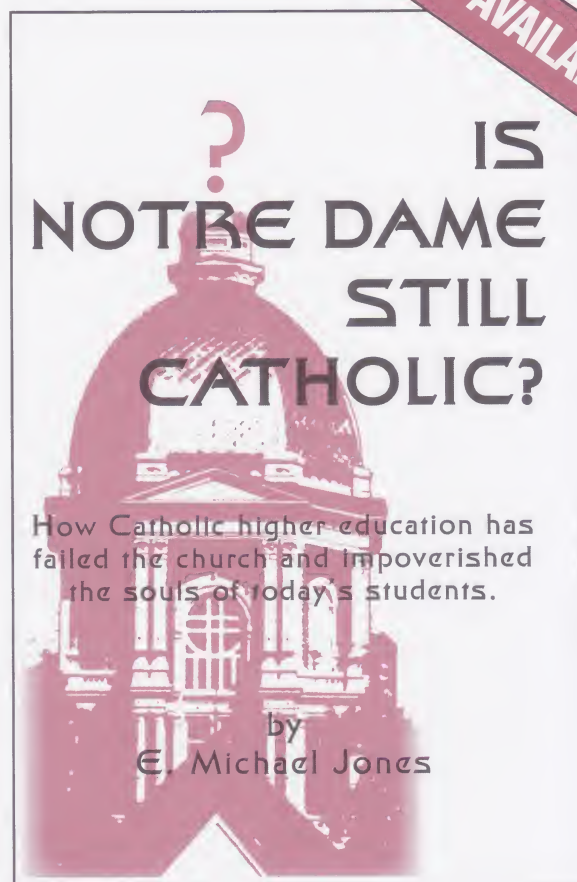


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*By April, 2009 over 250,000 people had signed a petition condemning Notre Dame's actions, and Bishop Thomas J. Olmstead of the Phoenix, Arizona diocese joined with his colleague Bishop D'Arcy in denouncing Jenkins' decision, calling the decision to honor President Obama a "public act of disobedience" and a "grave mistake."*

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# Culture Wars

*"No social progress outside the moral order."*



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Typesetting and Layout

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# LETTERS

## SPLENDID BENEFIT

You always manage to explain something that has disturbed me for awhile. In your recent "Niggas in Denial" (CW, October 2010) article you explain what happened to the rabble-rousing blacks of the 1960s. I knew the government had silenced them, in several ways, but never knew the whole story. It is a special benefit to us that you do all the research that we would never have the time or wherewithal to uncover the big picture. Your work is a treasure and I am grateful you are able to share it with us.

Marcia J. Pokus  
Red Bank, New Jersey

## ELOQUENT LETTER

Thank you for your answer, in the October 2010 issue of *Culture Wars*, to Fr. Harrison's attack, in which answer you quote Harrison: "There is no more eloquent defense of the rights and duties... than the one offered by Martin Luther King, Jr., in his 'Letter From Birmingham Jail...'" It reminded me of the time, a few years ago, when a famous liberal-arts college in Michigan proposed a sort of memorial to Martin L. King and that same "Letter from Birmingham Jail." The college quoted some of the letter, and I had to agree that it is eloquent. But I had to reply to the college approximately as follows: "We know who wrote King's doctoral dissertation, because we know whose mistakes in spelling and grammar he copied. We know that Communist wrote his 'I Have A Dream' speech. But did we ever

find out who wrote his 'Letter From Birmingham Jail'? Having heard no more about the King memorial, I think it has been quietly interred.

Jim Ware  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

## NAME-CALLING

I was disappointed to see in your letters to the editor in the October issue of CW 2010, in your reply you did not make a reasoned argument why they were in moral error who favored the war in Iraq, but instead saying that were either fools or prostitutes (Matthew 5:22).

I realize that in the Catholic Catechism it seems to imply that the just wars are only wars of defense. But what happened to the popes who supported and preached the Crusades? What happened to the Teutonic Knights and William the Conquer? What happened to the attempt to convert the warrior class to a "defense of the damsels in distress" and the defense of the poor in their fight against the tyrants, symbolized by St. George and the dragon?

What happened to the promises to Abraham to inherit Palestine? What happened to Joshua, Deborah and Barak, Gideon, Samson, David and Solomon who conquered Palestine? What happened to Elijah who slew the prophets of Baal? What happened to Jesus Christ who conquered Death by death that we might have eternal life, have the power to be made the sons of God in him, be partakers of the divine nature, and rule with him in glory? What happened to the Christians who are to put on the whole armor of God

that they might do battle with the demons?

It seems that both Scripture and Tradition do not only justify wars of defense but also wars of conquest. I am disappointed because you do not give a reason for either type of war, and do not provide an analysis for distinguishing what is a just war, but rely on name-calling.

Charles Caldwell  
Naples, Florida

## AN APOLOGY

If any fools or prostitutes were offended by me linking them with the Holy Trinity of Catholic Neconservative Warmongers — Weigel, Novak and Neuhaus/George — then I apologize. Otherwise, I stand by what I said.

To see the attack on Iraq in the light of Biblical precedent evokes Milton's tract on Divorce and all the worst aspects of the Puritan culture that got transplanted to New England. We are not a "City on a Hill" and have never been such anywhere but in the dank confines of the Puritan imagination. Our actions *ad bellum* have to be judged according to Just War Criteria, and according to these criteria the Bush war fails the test, no matter how many fools and prostitutes supported it.

E. Michael Jones  
South Bend, Indiana

## THE REAL "DUCK-BILLED PLATYPUS"

In letters column of the October 2010 issue of *Culture Wars*, Father



Brian Harrison supports "The Manhattan Declaration," calling for bishops, presumably he means to include the Bishop of Rome, to butt out of "detailed policies about progressive tax rates, higher minimum wages, and the expansion of health care." In mentioning these three issues in particular, and proposing that we should leave them to the laity, Princeton Professor Robert George, the author of that manifesto, just happens to present three of the hottest of the hot-but-ton issues where neoconservatives, who speak mainly for capitalist plutocrats, are most sensitive about clerical meddling. And "clerical meddling," considering the dissent following social encyclicals since the 1960s, ranges up to the level of the papal *magisterium*. *Progressive tax rates* imply taxation according to ability which at the practical level generally means income taxes. *Higher minimum wages* amount to just wages for all adult workers. *Universal health care* means providing the same kind of care for all citizens — "cheap or even free of charge," — (as John Paul II put it in his labor encyclical), the way Congressmen and Senators and senior citizens now get their health care in the U. S.

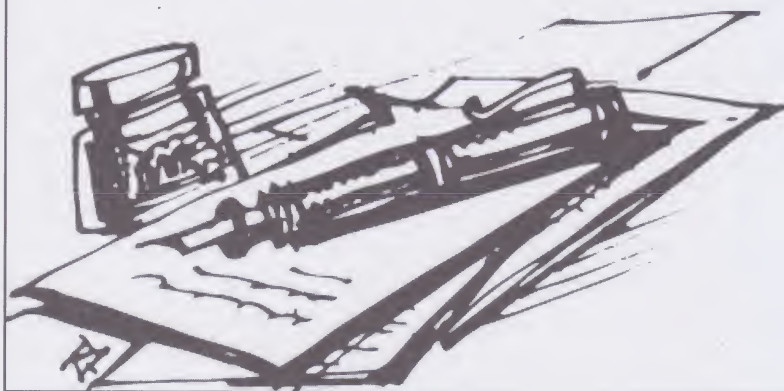
Now as for the laity, their involvement in such matters is a given. Except for a few years during the Great Depression (I think of Father Charles Coughlin, Msgr. John Ryan, and Father, later Bishop, Francis J. Haas), such matters have always been largely the domain of laymen. And starting soon after World War II, the process of undoing social measures adopted during that era proceeded until we ended up in the present Great Recession. Fortunately, some

remnants of programs adopted during the Depression — like unemployment insurance and like the federal deposit insurance program — survived, which averted total disaster recently for our banking system and its depositors.

Aside from that brief episode, economics and the economy have been lay "apostolates" from the start. The Physiocrats in the 18<sup>th</sup> century proposed that correct economic actions stemmed from "laws of nature" installed by "god," to be sure, but a strange "god" who

thereafter showed no further interest in the governance of the world and economic life. The classical economists during the 19<sup>th</sup> century concurred, and elaborated by "discovering" the "laws" of economics and how they worked. These were, of course, supposed to be like physical natural laws, so that the importance of moral natural laws was soon deemed superfluous. After the impending shipwreck became apparent, and the Marxian revolution shook the resultant degenerate capitalist world to its

*Culture Wars* welcomes letters to the editor. Preference will be given to letters which deal with topics discussed in the magazine. Letters should ideally be limited to one single-spaced page, but we know how difficult it is to follow ideals in this world. Letters can be sent by mail to Culture Wars, 206 Marquette Ave., South Bend, IN 46617; by fax to 219-289-1461; or by electronic mail to [Jones@culturewars.com](mailto:Jones@culturewars.com).





foundations, the old crew returned back on deck, determined to restore things to where they had been. Governments were banished to night-watchman status, with self-interest (greed), hopefully redeemed in old age by generous philanthropy, providing the driving force. These revivalists were designated variously as neo-classical economists, neo-liberals, and neoconservatives. They include prominently also the so-called *Austrian School*, featuring especially Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek. These were Jewish agnostics, and Hayek in particular had little use for specifically the concept *social justice*. He considered it a "a devious plot that will lead to fascism."

The "Austrians" made their mark in the United States after World War II where they opposed the so-called Keynesian revolution by aggressively promoting a return to free market individualism. Catholics were often seduced by the notion that Austrians are presumed to be Catholics. Mises and Hayek (formerly a socialist) had little use for anything related to Catholic social teachings, and their championing of individualism and free markets clash head-on with Catholic social teachings. For Catholic Austrians one must turn to people like the Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss. He had planned to introduce what he called the "*Quadragesimo Anno* state," but was assassinated by the Nazis in 1934. Also Msgr. Johannes Messner, the great social ethicist who is being proposed for beatification, did monumental work in support of Catholic social teachings. These were authentic Austrians, imbued with spirit of papal teachings, as was my former

professor Kurt Schuschnigg who succeeded Dollfuss, and who ended up spending seven years in a Nazi concentration camp.

The Anglo economists, who played a major role in shaping liberal or free market economics during the 19<sup>th</sup> century were mostly of the *laity* insofar as serious affiliation with any religion or church was concerned. Marx, in *Das Kapital*, which he wrote in London, then at the center of the capitalist world, indicated mockingly in the *Preface*: "The English Established Church, e.g., will more readily pardon an attack on 38 of its 39 articles than on 1/39th of its income." He was less inclined to not take the Roman Catholic Church seriously, even though Karl did not live to experience the appearance of *Rerum Novarum*. Thus he viewed with some alarm the activity of the German Bishop of Mainz, Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler. In 1869, in a letter to Friedrich Engels, his companion, he wrote: The dogs (clergy) are toying with the labor problem as, for example, the priests (*Pfaffen*) of the Düsseldorf Congress and Bishop Ketteler in Mainz."

It's interesting, isn't it, that now priests like Father Harrison, along with neoconservatives like Professor George and his Manhattan manifesto join with Karl Marx in expressing alarm when clergy involve themselves in specific social issues. And there is good reason for such alarm. The purpose of the great social encyclicals dating to 1891 is precisely to present teachings for the *laity* which inevitably finds itself in charge of the economy and the institutions which comprise the social order. The Church would be untrue to its

magisterial mission if it did not offer guidance when people seem determined to destroy themselves and especially the poorer and weaker members of society by gross violations specifically of justice and charity—the all-important cardinal and theological virtues. As Pope John Paul II pointed out, its social doctrine "belongs to the field not of ideology, but of theology and particularly of moral theology." (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 41). Now the early encyclicals were addressed to the bishops and clergy so that they could pass instructions on to their faithful who in those days were far less educated than more recent generations. It was Blessed John XXIII who in *Mater et Magistra* (1961) first addressed also, "all Clergy and Faithful of the Catholic World." And it was that encyclical, the first to be addressed also directly to the laity that begot the famous explicit rejection of Church teaching with the response — "*Mater Si; Magistra No*" — from the Catholic layman, William Buckley, who was editor of the *National Review*. His reaction and ideology played a major role in launching the neoconservative rebellion against Catholic social teachings generally by succeeding generations of *laity* and also some clergy!

In his encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (1963), Blessed John XXIII expanded his invitation to the laity by addressing it "To All Men of Good Will." And the great John Paul II made the matter gender-inclusive by addressing his encyclicals "To All Men and Women of Good Will." My point is, since their beginnings, the social encyclicals were intended for all, specifically the laity who would in any



case be faced with translating the teachings into action in the various specific contexts. But it was the Church in the first instance as “the expert in humanity” (JP II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* 41) which through its *Magisterium* had to make known those moral principles. As John Paul II pointed out, its social doctrine “belongs to the field, not of *ideology* but of *theology* and particularly of moral theology” (41, emphasis his). Blessed John XXIII had already affirmed its validity: “What the Catholic Church teaches and declares regarding the social life and relationships of men is beyond question for all time valid” (*Mater et Magistra* 218). That sounds pretty *magisterial* to me.

Now Catholics accept that the *magisterium* of the Catholic Church starts at the top—its papacy—which enjoys special protection from error in both dogmatic and moral teachings (such as neo-liberal think tanks do not); and moral teachings are mainly what its social doctrine involves. This cannot be preempted by the lower level of clergy, let alone the laity. Furthermore, when popes issue encyclicals addressed to the social order, they have available and consult with skilled experts in the respective fields that are involved, e.g. economics, sociology, demography etc. Normal prudence would require that. The same cannot always be said about certain *laymen* who routinely criticize papal social teachings, like the neoconservative ones mentioned by Michael Jones in his reply to Father Harrison. For example, the lay theologian, George Weigel, after what must have been a very hasty reading of the Pope Benedict social encyclical

*Caritas in Veritate*, declared that great magisterial work to be a “Duck-billed Platypus.” Nothing I have ever read over a long lifetime of study of papal social teachings ranks at that abysmal level of commentary. Among other things there is evidence of a complete lack of any familiarity with economic reality—which the Pope Benedict encyclical addresses in extensive detail. (See CW, March and May 2010).

Now it is clear that every statement in a social encyclical does not rank at the top level of infallible moral teachings. That is one reason why the encyclicals call for careful reading, i.e. study, not speed-reading, to discern what is specific moral teaching. For example in *Mater et Magistra*, there are recurrent instances, like the statement: “As regards taxation, assessment according to ability to pay is fundamental to a just and equitable tax system” (132). With regard to foreign aid by richer nations to poor nations—a favorite bugbear for neoconservatives—we find this teaching: “Now justice and humanity require that these richer countries come to the aid of those in need (161). In discussing the alleged overpopulation problem the same Blessed Pope wrote: “In this connection we strongly affirm that human life is transmitted and propagated through the instrumentality of the family which rests on marriage, one and indissoluble, and so far as Christians are concerned, elevated to the dignity of a sacrament” (193).

Our country is now in more serious economic trouble than at any time since the Great Depression. It is time at least for Catholics, laity and clergy alike, to study in earnest

the remarkable body of the now more than century of social teachings by the Catholic Church. Thanks to the great John Paul II, who himself issued a remarkable trilogy of social encyclicals, we now have also the excellent *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. It summarizes the teachings also by all previous popes.

May the scandalous carping by Catholics, both lay and clerical, against their Church’s teaching in this important area, along with their preposterous clamor for the revival of what is the real “Duck-billed Platypus”—the free market ideology—which has now once again brought our economy and economies throughout the world to the brink of disaster, soon come to an end.

Rupert J. Ederer  
Clarence, New York

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## SKILLED MECHANICS

After reading your recent article entitled “Traditionalism at the End of its Tether”, I thought that you were engaging in a bit of hyperbole or at the least making an attempt to rationalize your own doubts about where the modern post Vatican II Church is taking its shrinking flock. While I acknowledge that the SSPX is in trouble, you cannot possibly believe that those like myself, who fled the SSPX the minute Bishop Fellay began making overtures to compromise with Rome, would abandon our belief in traditional Catholicism. As soon as talks began, most traditionalists knew the reconcilia-



tion process could only lead to the destruction of the SSPX or more likely another traditional splinter group. Rest assured, traditionalism is not at the end of its Tether. Most "trads" are what they are because they know their faith and refuse to be bamboozled by the political gamesmanship that has replaced real pastoral care with "dialogue".

After reading *The Jewish Revolutionary Spirit*, I know that you, better than anyone, knows how the "Synagogue of Satan" operates and insinuates itself into the fabric of the institutions it wants to control in order to meet its goals. I have learned much from reading your books and magazine, but I often ponder how someone with so vast a knowledge of the numerous historical attacks on the Catholic Church can avoid the obvious. There is such an abundance of evidence that Vatican II and its aftermath were the work of skilled mechanics whose sole goal was the destruction of the only obstacle to the "one world Marxist government" which is growing all around us. The occurrences leading up to Vatican II confirm the treachery and deceit that surrounded the preparations of the schemas for the Council and the political maneuvers that occurred during the Council. Your own documented investigations of the work of the "Synagogue of Satan" throughout the ages proves a continuity of action which connects the unholy trinity of Zionism, Freemasonry, and Communism to the modernism and liberalism which has overtaken Holy Mother Church and is manifested abundantly in the fruits of Vatican II. This past September is the one hundredth anniversary of the "Oath against modernism"

promulgated by Pope Saint Pius the X that every one of the attendees of the council (including Joseph Ratzinger) swore to uphold upon their ordinations. They swore to battle against the very things that they implemented through Vatican II. Mr. Jones your books are full of details about the work of the "fifth column" within the Church and yet you do not see their fingerprints on Vatican II. How did a Church founded upon tradition suddenly find itself remade into a carbon copy of the Reformation era Protestant revolutionary churches? How did a priest from an "iron curtain" country where most priests of integrity were in jail manage to become the first non-Italian pontiff in a very long time? This is a case of "who are you going to believe, me or your own lying eyes."

We are eyewitnesses to the greatest threat to the Church in her history and yet most cannot or do not want to see things that are too blatant to ignore. Doctrines are turned on their head. Corruption and vice reign while Pontiffs worship in heretical ceremonies. Pope John Paul II openly kisses the Koran for the world to see and if that isn't enough he receives the blessing of the Hindu god Shiva (goddess of death and destruction) and you question Bishop Williamson for his caution. Isn't it peculiar? Traditionalists are the only ones the Church believes are outside salvation while every pagan religion is perfectly fine and will share in the heavenly reward. All but those damned Traditionalists? They're not in communion with the Holy Father. They're outside the Church. Meanwhile, clergy around the world can do as they wish and

the Holy Father can do nothing because the hierarchical structure of the Church must yield to the new collegiality. Well at least it gives the Pope a measure of plausible deniability.

No, Mr. Jones. Traditionalism is not at the end of its tether and yes the gates of Hell will not prevail against her. Although you conveniently interpret that to mean that she will never be threatened by destruction from evil or sinful men, or that we have never seen an antipope in Church history. The question you need to ask yourself is what our Lord asked in Luke 18:8 "But yet the Son of man, when he cometh, shall he find, think you, faith on earth?" I for one will stay with the Church doctrines that have been handed down through Church tradition for two thousand years before I risk my soul on this modernist attempt to reconcile the Church to the world. This is especially so for this world which has more in common with the description of the world given in the book of Revelations than I care to contemplate. As St. Augustine said "we will be judged not only for what we know to be evil, but for what we should have known." If tradition was right and it protected the One, True, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church before Vatican II, I am quite confident that tradition will be true when my time of judgment comes. If it were true before, how can it be false now? Can you say the same about the modern church?

St. Aquinas said, "Hold firmly that our faith is identical with that of the ancients. Deny this, and you dissolve the unity of the Church." If there is any unity in the post Vatican II Church, it appears to be



that of the forces of those unified against her. This should be a clear sign that the enemy is within the gates and that is why tradition, like the catacombs, will prevent the "gates of hell" from prevailing; and it will never be at the "End of its Tether".

Rich Angley  
Nokomis, Florida

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### MONUMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE

Congratulations for showing what I believe is the only right perspective in your interview with Bishop Williamson, i.e., that the problem lies not with heretical Conciliar documents, but Conciliar documents which tend to be ambiguous in parts and abstruse in others. Christ promised infallibility to His Church, but gave no divine guarantee that its Conciliar prose would be characterized by crystal lucidity. The very ambiguity of critical passages opens them up, in some cases, to misinterpretation, further ambiguization or downright manipulation by the enemies of the truth. Of course, they must be interpreted in the light of perennial Catholic teaching. The thing for Catholics is adherence to the substance of the one Faith as expressed throughout the Church's history.

I also listened to your podcast with Dr. Sunic regarding Medjugorje, inter alia. I was first introduced to the Medjugorje phenomenon way back in 1984, when I attended a Charismatic Youth Congress presided over by Fr. Emiliano Tardiff in Navojoa, Sonora. Being an impressionable youth at the time, I was swept up into both

Charismania and Medjugorje. After a few months, it was pretty obvious to me that Medjugorje was bogus. It took me longer to come to that conclusion about the Charismatic Renewal. About ten years ago, I finally wrote a couple of books about both movements, portions of which I published on Rick Salbato's website. The book on Charismatics was longer than the one about Medjugorje, but not particularly well written— to me, in retrospect, my writing sounded like the guy H. L. Mencken parodied in his "Visit to the YMCA." In any case your works have now taken on monumental significance in the battle for Catholic- and eternal- truth. Thanks again.

Brian Hughes  
brianhughes14@hotmail.com

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### UNJUSTIFIED ATTACK

In his unjustified attack against this writer Mr. B. Chapinski writes (Culture Wars, May 2010, page 9): "When it was recognized by the end of 1943 and in 1944, by all sane men, that Hitler could not win the war, every building in the ancient city of Warsaw was destroyed. *Was this type of behavior one of the reasons why infuriated Allies bombed historical Dresden?*" (Dresden Bombing: February 13/14, 1945).

The answer to his question is, of course: "No, the Warsaw destruction has nothing to do with Dresden, for the simple reason that mass destruction by phosphor fire bombing of German cities was in full swing years before the Warsaw uprising, during it (August — September 1944) and in the last

months of the war until May 2/3, 1945 (last attack on Kiel). Chapinski's Dresden reference tries only to justify an Allied crime with a German crime. It will be shown that this trick does not work. It was "recognized by all sane men" who knew Stalin, that the Warsaw Uprising could not succeed. Without this ill-conceived and unnecessary uprising Warsaw would have survived WWII just like Paris, Prague, Brüssel, Copenhagen, Oslo, Moscow, Washington, DC, and London. Richard C. Lukas [1, p. 208] explained why it was "ill-conceived" in three short sentences: "Heavy weapons were nonexistent. An ammunition shortage existed from the outset. ... With only 2,629 carbines, only 6 percent of the soldiers could be armed with rifles." (!!!) Is it not irresponsible to start an uprising under these conditions and sacrifice thousands of young people who should live and not die for their country?

Let's see what happened in Germany during that time of the "uprising" (August — September 1944). Today's Americans certainly do not know it. The mass media have reported many times gruesome details about the Warsaw uprising, but they never described what Poland's good friends did at the same time (August 1, — October 5, 1944) in Germany. Most old Germans who experienced it have died. The young Germans are told very little true facts about what really happened at that time. Here is a list of the bombing attacks on large, new and "ancient" cities at 13 days only during the time of the uprising. The full list for the 66 days is shown in the Appendix. [2]

(continued on p. 47)



# Culture of Death Watch



## White Christmas Subversion

Last year the *Washington Post's* lead editorial on Christmas Day, an editorial entitled simply "Christmas" in print, but "Christmas not what it used to be, but becoming better" on-line, opined that Irving Berlin's song "White Christmas" is "the most essential contribution of all to the creation of the 20th-century American Christmas," which is "a Christmas that was secular, sentimental, commercial and, to a large extent, more inclusive than the religious celebration that preceded and now accompanies it."

Sadly, there's much truth in the *Post's* statement. The American Christmas celebration is largely a secular, sentimental, and commercial orgy that has overwhelmed or displaced the Church's celebration of Christmas. But there is also falsification. The American Christ-

mas is not more inclusive; it has a narrow vision; recognizing only the natural, it tolerates the supernatural only as a sentimental affectation or commercial prop.

In contrast, the Catholic Church is universal, catholic, and inclusive: no one who professes what the Church professes is excluded; all are welcome. America builds border walls to exclude Mexicans, but the Church welcomes all believers regardless of race, color, sex, age, physical infirmity, or national origin. Christ came not for one nation or tribe, but for all men. The Church celebrates Christmas as the birth of Him who redeemed all mankind, not just Americans, not just Jews. What could be more inclusive?

How did White Christmas transform Christmas? Why is it "the

most essential contribution of all to the creation of the 20th-century American Christmas?"

"Like a number of other popular songs that came along during the war, [White Christmas] captured the sadness of separation, the longing for peace and normality and the nostalgia for a better time that really wasn't that long ago. These shared emotions gave Christmas a new poignancy and significance during the war years, and made it something different from what it had been," continued the *Post*. "Radio, with its nationwide audience — just about everyone listened to the same shows — not only amused and entertained, it comforted and reassured. In the dark war years, it created a new Christmas spirit. ... Christmas has continued to move toward becom-



ing a truly national holiday, a time of good feeling and universally shared hopes, and an occasion in which all can share."

Is that really all there is to it? Christmas changed because of the Second World War, and now it has become a wishy-washy national holiday of good feelings and shared hopes?

Writing in the *New York Times* last December, musician Michael Feinstein captioned his piece: "Whose Christmas Is It?" Feinstein also embraces the fatuous idea championed in the *Post* editorial that Christmas is becoming better because it is becoming secular and inclusive. But he probes a little deeper into the genesis of the popular songs that abet the transformation of Christmas into a national holiday instead of a Catholic holiday:

The evolution of Christmas is reflected to a degree in its music. As the holiday has become more secular, so have its songs, with religious and spiritual compositions largely supplanted by the banalities of Rudolph, sleigh bells and Santa. Many Christians feel that the true essence of Christmas has been lost, and I respect that opinion. It must be difficult to see religious tradition eroded in the name of commerce and further dissipated by others' embrace of a holiday without a sense of what it truly means to the faithful.

Yet I also hope that those who feel this encroachment will on some level understand that the spirit of the holiday is universal. We live in a multicultural time and the

mixing, and mixing up, of traditions is an inevitable result. Hence we have the almost century-old custom of American Jews creating a lot more Christmas music than Hanukkah music.

If you look at a list of the most popular Christmas songs, you'll find that the writers are disproportionately Jewish: Irving Berlin's "White Christmas," "The Christmas Song" (yes, Mel Tormé was Jewish), "Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!," "I'll Be Home for Christmas," "Silver Bells," "Santa Baby," "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" and "Winter Wonderland" — perennial, beloved and, mostly, written for the sheet music publishers of Tin Pan Alley, not for a show or film. (Two notable exceptions: "White

Faulkner Award, writer Philip Roth provided still deeper insight:

The radio was playing 'Easter Parade' and I thought, But this is Jewish genius on a par with the Ten Commandments. God gave Moses the Ten Commandments and then He gave to Irving Berlin 'Easter Parade' and 'White Christmas.' The two holidays that celebrate the divinity of Christ — the divinity that's the very heart of the Jewish rejection of Christianity — and what does Irving Berlin brilliantly do? He de-Christ's them both! Easter he turns into a fashion show and Christmas into a holiday about snow. Gone is the gore and the murder of Christ — down with the crucifix and up with the bonnet! *He turns their religion into schlock.* But nicely! Nicely! So nicely the *goyim* don't even know what hit 'em.

### **"What does Irving Berlin brilliantly do? He turns their religion into schlock."**

Christmas," introduced in "Holiday Inn," and "Silver Bells," written for "The Lemon Drop Kid.")

Feinstein suggests that Jews wrote popular Christmas songs simply because that's what sold: "Tin Pan Alley songwriters ... churned out songs to order on every conceivable subject for their publishers." Is that all there is to it? The change in Christmas resulted from a commercial transaction?

In *Operation Shylock: A Confession*, which won a 1994 PEN/

They love it. *Everybody* loves it. The Jews especially. Jews loathe Jesus. People always tell me Jesus is Jewish. I never believe them. It's like when people used to tell me Cary Grant was Jewish. *Bullshit.* Jews don't want to *hear* about Jesus. And can you blame them? So — Bing Crosby replaces Jesus as the beloved Son of God, and the Jews, the *Jews*, go around whistling about Easter! And is that so disgraceful a means of defusing the en-

(continued on p. 47)



# The Ciompi Rebellion of 1378

E. Michael Jones

**"Money is sterile."**

—Aristotle

**"As for Aristotle's argument that money is sterile, Calvin has only contempt for it."**

—John T. Noonan, Jr., *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury*

Between the years 1347 and 1349 a bacillus known as *Yersinia pestis*, which was transmitted from rats to humans via the fleas which fed on both species, created one of the greatest natural disasters ever to afflict the European subcontinent. Known as the Black Death or the Bubonic Plague because of the black bubae or lumps which the corpses of those who succumbed to the disease exhibited, it eventually swept away 40 percent of the population of Europe. One of the main consequences of this catastrophe was a shortage of labor. Given the inexorable workings of the law of supply and demand, this shortage of labor should have led to an increase of wages. Unfortunately, the owners of the land from which most Europeans earned their wages had never heard of the law of supply and demand, and so, in the spirit of the Persian emperor who had the sea flogged with chains for sinking his ships, they decided to keep wages where they were when Europe had almost twice as many workers. Their decision and the means they used to carry it out led to worker rebellions across Europe.

In 1358 the Jacquerie rose in the Oise valley north of Paris. Twenty-three years later, the situation remained pretty much what it had been. When a tax-collector arrived in the English village to demand payment of the one shilling poll tax, he was run out of town. When 15-year-old King Richard II sent his sol-

diers to restore order, the peasants rose in revolt and eventually coalesced under the leadership of a man named Wat Tyler. On June 2, 1381, the peasants, now 60,000 strong set off for London to plead their case before the king. During their march on London, the peasants burned down every government building housing public records which they could find, an infallible sign of indebtedness. When the peasants rebelled against Jewish moneylenders two centuries earlier, records of indebtedness were the first casualty and Jewish moneylenders the second. The rebellion quickly lost its focus and got out of control as Tyler's followers succumbed to drink and the lure of looting. When Tyler was negotiating with the king, the mayor of London, incensed at his lack of respect, drew his knife and stabbed Tyler in the neck. Eventually Tyler lost his head, and the rebellion fizzled. As a result, none of the economic issues which led to the revolt ever got recognized, much less resolved.

Three years before Wat Tyler's rebellion in England, the same unresolved economic issues led to a workers' rebellion in Florence, at that time one of the most advanced financial and industrial centers in Europe. Florence at this time "seethed with partisan and class antagonisms" for the same reasons that these antagonism flourished in England and France. Wages were low, and prices were high: "People are living in misery since they earn little and prices have been so high for 13 months and more. Just think about those who have three or four or five children, and who are assessed two or three florins, and who have to live from the labor of their hands and those of their wives. How can they stay here and live?"

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E. Michael Jones is the Editor of *Culture Wars*. This article is a chapter from his forthcoming history of capitalism.





Wages were kept artificially low, while at the same time taxes were allowed to rise with impunity. In Florence, the unrest among the working classes went back to the 1340s when they were subjected to "a combination of low wages and increases in gabelle rates that made it their worst decade of the century." The situation improved after the plague when wages tripled for masons, builders and their assistants and doubled in other industries, but prices rose as well. "Prices also rose, but not as much as wages, and conditions were

the single income of an unskilled apprentice or journeyman never earned enough to cover costs, either before or after the plague, despite the doubling of wages.

In order to deal with their deteriorating economic condition, the unskilled workers who were hardest hit tried to reduce costs by moving in with relatives, but most were forced to go into debt, at the usurious rates (43 1/3 percent per annum) which were common at the time. As a result, "Workers' indebtedness was widespread."

In 1427, 81 percent of 357 households of textile workers in Santo Spirito quarter reported debts in their Catasto declarations, on average equivalent to 55 percent of assets, and debts exceeded assets in 30 percent of the city's households. . . . Wool guild records are filled with reports of confiscations for unpaid debts, requested by creditors and carried out by guild officials who carted off furniture, beds, mattresses, tools and equipment, including the looms of poor weavers, making it impossible for them to work. Some spent months in debtors' prison.

The ability to borrow money at interest rates like this provided short-term relief but guaranteed even greater conflict in the future. By 1378, the situation had become intolerable for Florence's unskilled workers. On June 20 of that year mobs began roaming the city,

### One of the main consequences of the Black Death was a shortage of labor.

never better for 14<sup>th</sup> century workers than in the decades 1350-70." That and the fact that wages were paid in a debased silver coinage undercut any real gains. The wage in Florence never really reached the point at which it was sufficient to raise a family, the sine qua non of real economic progress. As a result,

Unmarried masons with no dependents who found steady work generally earned twice what they needed for basic living costs even before the plague, and three and four times their living costs over the next 20 years.

but

Families with two adults and two children and only

setting fire to the houses of the oligarch families who controlled both the economy and the government. There were rumors of meetings in working class districts the Oltrarno neighborhood on the other side of the Arno River, at which "workers exchanged ritual oaths and kisses sealing their intention," according to one chronicler, "to stay together to the death and defend themselves against anyone wishing to harm them." Then, on June 21, a group of 7,000 workers and guildsmen broke into the palace of the podesta in order "to destroy the records of investigations and convictions of workers." Having gotten out of debt the old-fashioned way, the same band of workers unfurled their flag, depicting a set of tongs which expressed their



willingness to use force to get their way, from the top of the Bargello's tower.

On July 22, the Ciompi then elected Michele Lando, one of their number who had also been both a textile worker and a corporal in the Florentine army, as Standardbearer of Justice. Under the leadership of Michele Lando, the Ciompi demanded the right to organize and relief from the fiscal policies that were grinding them into dust. The workers in Florence who did not belong to big guilds like the Arte della Lana bore the brunt of fiscal policies that were meant to keep them poor and keep the rich rich. The Ciompi, the unskilled textile workers who were the sorters, shearers and carders, wanted a guild of their own, and once they got one just about "every male of working age (in a population of 55,000) was a guildsman in the remarkable summer of 1378." The Ciompi Rebellion made 1378 "the most memorable year in Florentine history." John Najemy calls the Ciompi rebellion, "the continental divide between two different political universes." It was also the last chance the Florentines had to solve the problem that would eventually lead to the decline and fall of the Florentine republic, namely, the labor issue. In September 1378, the guilds of skilled craftsmen turned on the Ciompi and established what amounted to a workers' regime which deliberately excluded the workers who were in the greatest need:

After dismantling the guild of the Ciompi, the remaining 23 guilds established the last and most radical of Florence's guild governments, which ruled from September 1378 to January 1382 until its overthrow by the elite and the beginning of a gradual realignment of class relations that transformed Florentine political culture.

After 1382, the oligarchs regained power, and forever afterward would use the rising of the Ciompi as a way of intimidating the Florentines into supporting oligarch interests. It was in many ways a prefiguring of the anti-Communist crusade of the 1950s. The threat of worker rebellion was used to stifle any discussion of the legitimacy of their grievances and, more importantly, any discussion of the role which a just wage played in creating economic prosperity.

Samuel Kline Cohn lumps the Ciompi rebellion with the Hussite rebellion of 1419, but a comparison of the two events shows that they were completely different in their orientation. The Hussite rebellion was

essentially religious in its orientation. It was the first outbreak of the Jewish Revolutionary Spirit in Europe since the fall of the Roman Empire. It bespoke hatred of the social order established by the Church and an attempt to establish heaven on earth via Jewish Messianic politics.

The Ciompi rebellion, on the other hand, was motivated by economic injustice. Brucker claims that it was driven by "proletarian dislike of the commune's fiscal system." Unlike the Taborite gatherings outside of Prague which preceded the defenestration which inaugurated the Hussite rebellion in 1419, the petition which Lando presented to the Signoria in June 1378 "did not seek to destroy the traditional framework of Florentine policies and society; its objective was a readjustment of that order to give the lower classes a greater voice in the regime."

Cohn's analysis only confirms what Brucker had to say. All of the Ciompi demands were economic in their orientation:

In its first acts of 21 July 1378, the new Ciompi government declared that no one was to be arrested for indebtedness for the next two years and changed the tax system of Florence toward greater equity. Second, within six months the old system of forced loans (*prestanze*) which favored citizens with the means to pay on time over the urban poor and those from the countryside, was to be abolished; now all would pay according to their wealth based on a property survey (*estimo*). Third, the new government in effect abolished the Monte or communal bank of Florentine state bonds, which had given favorable rates of return to the wealthy from monies that derived from indirect taxes (*gabelle*) and the direct taxes taken largely from the countryside. Fourth, the new government stabilized the rate of exchange between the gold florin and the money of payment (in copper [*rame*] or *piccioli*) at 68 shillings a florin. The inflation of the florin had been a means by which the wool guild and other Florentine entrepreneurs had lowered wages by stealth, devaluing the money that workers and artisans used for their daily transactions. In the year preceding the Revolt of the Ciompi, the rate of exchange had fluctuated between 70 and 75 shillings per florin, but since the first minting in 1215, it had risen almost fourfold. By stabilizing the exchange rate, the law in effect raised workers' purchasing power and thereby their wages. Finally, many shops had remained closed since the Ciompi revolt, and those that opened did little work. As a conse-



quence, many were starving. Thus in August, the government implemented elementary welfare measures to assist the poor.

The reforms were destined never to go into effect, because, on September 1, the guilds of skilled workers turned on their own revolution. The Ciompi were in effect expelled from the regime they had brought into existence when the Signoria approved the dissolution of their guild. What followed was a regime based on guild republicanism, whose "economic policies constituted the most concerted effort in Florence's history to restructure the institutions and practices that had for so long resulted in transfers of wealth from the working classes to the wealthy." Those policies included the introduction of the *estimo*, a much more equitable tax based on calculations of house hold wealth, as well as a reduction of interest payments on the debt of 2,360,000 florins which Florence had acquired in her war with the papal states. The reduction of interest payments to 5 percent saved the commune 60,000 florins a year, but it antagonized the rentier class which had grown rich from funding wars. Speculators complained as well because many who had sold income producing property, like farms and businesses, in the hope of earning 10 to 15 percent on government bonds, now had their future earnings cut in half. Policies like this, which were pushing the elites

### **The Ciompi rebellion was motivated by economic injustice.**

toward counter-revolution, received added impetus when the guild regime executed Piero degli Albizzi and four other members of the oligarchic elite in December 1379. From this point on the elites portrayed the guild republicans as a front for revolutionary elements, even though it was the guild republicans who had brought about the exile of the Ciompi. Gradually, the oligarchic families were able to control the debate, and demonize anyone who was in favor of allowing workers to organize for higher wages. The humanists played a crucial role in this transformation of public opinion by becoming in effect propagandists for the oligarchs. In his history of the Florentine

people, the humanist Leonardo Bruni played up these fears by portraying the Ciompi as dangerous revolutionaries, who were bent, not on economic reforms, but in overthrowing the entire social order. Thanks to Bruni's history, "poor" and "criminals" became two ways of referring to a single social category."

The Ciompi rebellion was instrumentalized into an upper-class crusade to suppress wages by demonizing anyone who talked about workers' rights in this regard as a traitor to the new regime, which quickly coalesced around ruling class interests:

the notion that workers and the poor constituted a permanent danger became commonplace in the generation after 1380s and sustained deep hostility toward the lower classes. In 1390 a new bishop was installed in Florence ... [who] told those in power: "if you want to rule and keep control, keep the popolo hungry for bread."

Workers were associated with heresy and denounced as "Christ-killers."

Government intervention in the labor market insuring low wages was only part of the problem. As the petition of Ciompi grievances indicated, the main way that the Florentine oligarchs drove down wages was by debasing the currency. According to Pesch, the "main evil from which Europe and especially the Italian state suffered at the time was currency depreciation." He goes on to cite the maxim of Ganilh: "Italy was always famous for the worst money and the best works written about coinage."

When the Ciompi presented their demands to The Eight in 1378, Florence had had a bi-metal currency for over 120 years. The point of the gold Florin, which was created in 1252 to replace the Byzantine hyperperon and never debased, was to stabilize and facilitate foreign exchange. The point of the silver penny, which was debased mercilessly, was to keep wages low. The poor and the day laborer bore the brunt of this manipulation:

The only money generally coined in Italian mints, down to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, was the silver penny (*denaro*), which varied in alloy and weight from one mint to another and from one period to another with a constant and uniform tendency to debase-ment. Without going back to the original penny of Charlemagne, which was meant to contain 1.7



grams of silver, it is enough to point out that as late as the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century the penny of Lucca and Pisa, which was one of the most esteemed, still preserved a silver content of 0.6 gram, whereas 50 years later this had dropped to 0.25 gram. The frequent variation and continuous deterioration of the coinage were partly caused by the technical difficulty of meeting an increasing demand for money from an inelastic supply of silver. But the principal cause was the fiscal policy of the greater urban communes and princes, who regarded debasement of the coinage as a simple means of raising revenue without imposing any apparent charge upon their subjects. They found support for this convenient system in the so-called Nominalist doctrine, according to which the value of money was fixed by the will of the sovereign (*valor impositus*), as opposed to the Realist doctrine, according to which the value of money was limited by the value of the metal it contained (*bonitas intrinseca*). It should be added that, in those towns which developed large industries, persistent debasement of the smaller fractional coinage may have been influenced by the economic purpose of keeping down wages (which were paid in petty coin), thereby lowering the costs of production in the interest of exports.

Florence had inherited this policy from the Roman empire. The Roman emperors debased the currency for the same reason the Florentine oligarchs did, as a covert way of driving down wages. Under Septimus Severus the silver content of the denarius sank to less than two grams and under Caracalla to as low as 1.5 percent of the whole, making it little less than "silver-washed bronze." Instead of dealing directly with the debasement of the currency and the inflation it caused, the Roman emperors and their successors in Florence tried in vain to establish prices by imperial fiat and regulation. In 301 Rome issued price controls as a way of dealing with the inflation they had caused by debasing the denarius, but measures like this failed to help and ordinances of this sort proved impossible to enforce. Eventually even the government was forced to admit the debased value of its own coin when it refused to accept the denarius as payment for taxes, and people were forced to pay in kind. The net result was "A society where all production and exchange had been paralyzed by disorder and insecurity."

Florence stood at the crossroads of paganism and Christianity. What goes by the name of the Renaissance is generally seen as a debate about whether to re-

turn to classical models in art, but that debate also involved an economic component as well, namely, whether the Florentine oligarchs should structure their economic system in congruity with Christian principle or whether they should instead return to the economic system of pagan antiquity, a system based on usury, latifundia (the factory farms of their day) and slave labor. Florence was quite conscious of its role as heir apparent of the Roman Empire. The Renaissance which began in Florence around this time was an expression of that. But in reverting to pagan models, the Florentines ran the danger of adopting all of the corrupt financial practices that had led to the fall of the ancient world. In both ancient Rome and medieval Florence, free market capitalism meant little more than the right of the rich to oppress the poor: "The pressure of big operations on the poor . . . thus prevailed already in Rome as it does today among us, by virtue of the free enterprise and the power of capital that was established in Roman law."

## II

In the realm of economics, the most enduring legacy of the pagan world, next to debasing the currency, was contempt for labor. Pagan antiquity looked with disdain on physical labor, largely because the only people who were involved in performing it were slaves. "The closed Roman domestic economy—the oikos—knew practically only slave labor." In fact the identification of labor with slavery, and hence ownership by someone else became so complete that "The slave, and with him labor, even came to constitute a part of capital."

Chrematistics (or the "science" of how to accumulate gold) was naturally admired in a culture which viewed idleness and pleasure as supreme goods and work as something to be relegated to slaves. The necessary corollary of those views was contempt of labor. Since money was not to be—and in some instances could not be—earned by honest labor, the *homo economicus* of the ancient world sought to increase it by recourse to magic, speculation, or usury. Once "gold and silver became 'powerful gods' in Hellas," Avarice had a corrupting effect on the entire culture. In fact,

Everything which had seemed great and beautiful and honorable for the fathers, was weathered by this corrosive air, and nothing remained but unbounded self-seeking and a craving for pleasure, along with all of the affected sophistry by which people sought



to make the empty shell palatable as the fare of life.

The trajectory of free market capitalism replicated itself with uncanny regularity in every society which valued gold over human labor. In ancient Greece as in medieval Florence, unrestrained appetite led to slave rebellions like the Ciompi uprising in Florence, which, once they were crushed, led to “an aristocracy of money and of wealth, which prepared the way for the decline of the Greek states.” Plato described how:

[T]he pursuit of gold (chrematistics) became the all-powerful incentive for action for at least a part of society. This change in the public spirit, according to Plato, gives rise, even in an aristocratic society, to a class of people whose gods are money, which they honor secretly with crude passion. . . . The money chest of the rich, filled with gold. . . soon begins to exert its fascination on the whole community. . . . a substantial competition for material possessions is unleashed which constantly increases the avarice; whereas on the other hand, the ideal goods (the arete) sink in the public esteem . . . . For where one bows down before the riches of the rich, one must naturally look with disdain on the virtue of “the good.” . . . The natural consequence of this do-

**In the realm of economics, the most enduring legacy of the pagan world, next to debasing the currency, was contempt for labor.**

minion of money and of speculation is that then even the state becomes dependent on the money magnates, and the expression of this dependence is the political dominion of capital, the plutocracy or the dominion of the few. . . . A sum of money (*plethos chrematon*) constitutes the measure which determines the right of the individuals in the state. This to a degree degenerates into two states, that of the rich and that of the poor.

True economic science never emerges in a society like this because it get strangled in its cradle by its evil twin Chrematistics. The economic principle (“minimum input with maximum output”) lies at the heart of economic exchange.

By and large, the “economic principle” consists simply in the application of a universal law of practical reason in the area of economics. Practical reason, in fact, requires always and everywhere that only such means are selected as are in proper harmony with the goals, purposes and desired results. A person who wishes to achieve a goal will also seek out the necessary means, and in fact, the best means if he is in earnest about achieving the goal. Squandering such means and wasteful expenditure goes counter to the dictates of prudence.

Labor has a price, but it is not a commodity in the sense that wool or grain is a commodity. As a result the economic principle (maximal return for minimal cost) does not apply to labor in the same way it applies to wool. When it comes to “the essence of labor,”

the principle of economy is no longer sufficient; if we try to perform work in the most economical way possible, then we will be reduced to the absurd level of doing nothing. The primitive man then becomes the most economical of beings, because he harvests the lush fruits of his tropical habitat with the least possible investment of time.

There is nothing at all reasonable about the kind of ‘economic rationality’ which seeks, on the one hand, only to get the highest possible wage for the lowest possible effort, or on the other hand, to get the greatest possible effort for the lowest possible wage. In other words, there is not the least bit of rationality in the actions of

those who do business routinely with a view to getting the most that is possible while given the least that it is possible to give in return.

In the ancient world contempt for labor combined with chrematistics led to “the unhealthy accumulation of capital,” which led to widespread usury, which ultimately eventuated in economic collapse. The same thing happened in Florence in the aftermath of the Ciompi rebellion. The crucial link between Renaissance Florence and Ancient Rome is contempt for labor. Depriving the worker of a living wage inevitably concentrates wealth in the hands of the few, who then inevitably get involved in banking and usury, which then leads inevitably to financial collapse. Plato de-





Diocletian

scribed this trajectory in a slightly different manner when he claimed that free market capitalism leads inexorably to the oppression of the poor:

the greatest of all evils is the absolute freedom to sell and to acquire goods, which goes along with the spirit of money's dominion or which is at least tolerated by it. It stems from the fact of the unhealthy accumulation of capital which makes some overly rich while others are sinking into a condition of desperate poverty. . . . Plato presented it as a universal experience that the plutocracy eventually suppresses the great masses of those who are unable to push themselves up into the dominant class, to a proletarian subsistence. Thus, he is completely clear about this, that unbridled capitalism contains in itself the tendency to constantly increase the distance of the little people from the aristocracy of those with means, and that therefore by it large incomes and wealth grow much faster than the general wealth, and at the same time that class of population lives from hand to mouth without property, thus becomes ever larger absolutely as well as relatively. . . . Along with this society of drones . . . emerges before us a typical phenomenon of the plutocratic society of speculators: they are the people who Plato says raise avarice and greed for money to the dominant place in their souls, and who establish it as their great king in their souls decked out with headbands, golden chains, and decorative swords of honor. . . . such persons are able to appear as honorable men in business transactions. . . . Furthermore, the principle of dominion by capital itself falls prey to this kind of speculation. The insa-

urable greed of capitalistic society . . . therefore corresponds to that unbounded economic freedom which allows everyone to use his property as he pleases, and to sell it, so that capital indeed becomes the opportunity to enrich oneself by lending transactions and finally by the appropriation of mortgaged goods. This liberty brings ruin, above all to the kinds of persons who, giving in to the tendency in the capitalistic era to uneconomic consumption, and to luxury, fall into the hands of the moneyed people. Now the impoverished, Plato continues . . . cower in the state equipped with spears and other weapons: some overburdened with debt, others left without honor, and yet others affected by both, but all being full of hatred, and brooding with protests against those who deprived them of what was theirs, and in fact against the whole world, eyeing up anxiously the opportunity for a general upheaval. The moneyed people, however, who slink around depressed like their wicked consciences personified, and who appear not even to notice their victims "sling the arrow of money devastatingly at him who surrenders himself to them, in that they bring to themselves by interest payments a rich inheritance of that kind of father (i.e., of money) while creating a multitude of the drones and beggars in the state."

They look on passively the way the younger generation in particular give in to revelry. The decline of all spiritual and moral energy, as the enjoyment of unearned rents brings with it of psychological necessity, could scarcely be reflected more glaringly than in the picture which Plato painted of the "democratic" i.e., the son of the "oligarchic" money-making father, who loves personal lack of restraint above all else. "So the man lives from day to day, yielding each time to whatever appetite happens to tempt him; now he drinks and enjoys women flute players, and then again he drinks at the fountain and needs a weight loss cure; now he engages in all kinds of bodily exercises, and at other times he lies idle and worries about nothing; and then again he pretends to devote himself to studies. Quite commonly he gets involved in politics, mounts the rostrum, and says and does what happens to occur to him; or else his glance rests on people who are in the military system or in the banking system and soon he throws himself into that with zeal. Thus there is no order in his life, no urgency, but he calls that kind of life sweet and free, and he lives it until he dies. . . . this is how pauperism grows out of capitalism, and out of the free play of purely individualistic efforts we fi-



nally get the rule of force, tyranny.”

Rome learned nothing from Plato’s warnings. In fact:

The deleterious impact of the free economy: social disintegration, despoiling the good fortune of the majority, economic and political ruin, appear in Roman history no less clearly than in the ancient Hellenic world. Here we see how a society that is thoroughly undermined by a moneyed oligarchy, by pauperism, and by slavery also cannot be spared indefinitely by Caesarism from its decline.

During the period of Roman before the Punic Wars it was still possible to find “many independent peasants who produced on their own lands everything required for their own sustenance.” The Roman republic was characterized by “the self-sufficient oikos, of free peasants and free crafts.” But even then, according to Livy, the Patrician class sought to satisfy their avarice by recourse to the rapacious “usury that was occasioned by the poverty of many plebians, limited by no law, [and] supported by a harsh law of debt that was protected by the patrician courts.”

Confronted with a world which refused to pay a living wage, the ordinary worker tried to borrow his way

**“The greatest of all evils is the absolute freedom to sell and to acquire goods.”**

out of financial difficulty.

In their desperation . . . the hard-pressed plebians turned time and again to the rich patricians with pleas for loans to maintain their households and to fulfill their public obligations. However, the help which they found was their ruination, since they were not in a position to pay the oppressive interest. The rich filled their houses and properties ever more with servants who were bound and treated most harshly.

These destructive economic trends only increased in the period following the Punic Wars, when

enormous riches plundered from the conquered nations flowed to Rome, destroyed the old simplicity in morals, and gave rise to boundless luxury and waste. The goods which were rapidly being dissipated in this process still always had to be compensated for, so that an insatiable greed combined itself with the morally-corrupting luxury.

Usury became more and more common, until finally the *populus romanus* ended up totally impoverished.

Persons who did not fall victim to usury directly offered their land for sale voluntarily in order to be able to pay debts which service in war, taxes, etc. had caused. Nothing protected such a person from ruin. As a property owner he indeed had the right to sell freely, the right to evict himself from house and farm. . . . Cato the elder says, “He who pilfers private property sits in prison in chains; and the public thieves go about in purple and gold.”

The most miserable proletariat in vast number stood side by side the enormous wealth of the few. As a result of usury, the structure of Roman society was destroyed and the *populus romanus* was “reduced to being an insecure rootless mob.” Julius Caesar instituted the *Lex Iulia agraria*, which distributed state lands to the people, but every attempt at reform ran aground on the rock of slavery. Free farmers simply could not compete against latifundia, the factory farms of their day, run by slaves. In addition to that, political thinkers like Cato began to fear that Caesar was using land reform as a stepping stone to dictatorial power.

Whoever could no longer survive on the land streamed into the city, especially to Rome. [where] “the great masses of the people lived in virtual idleness, and they were supported by the state.” Craftsmen found themselves in the same predicament as independent farmers; neither group could compete against slave labor, and so gradually they joined the mob which lived off of the grain handout, which, as Seneca pointed out, “was received by the thief as well as by the perjurer and the adulterer; without regard to morals, everyone is a citizen.” In order to ingratiate himself further with the mob, Caesar even proposed giving them free wine. The “*congiarium*,” the share in the loot brought in from conquered lands,





became "the premium which the fear of the rich pays to idleness."

As the free enterprise system led inexorably to slavery, Rome began to assume "the aspect of a socialist society." The middle class expired and Roman society became "a mass of atoms." The Roman Leviathan state was content to deal with individuals "because in the long run absolutism can only come to terms with individuals." As in any society where free enterprise prevails "a battle between contending interests results; and in such a battle the stronger inevitably prevail. Averting the economic struggle, or at least diminishing it and protecting the weak in their economic survival against the superior force of the wealthy, that is something which Roman law did not regard as its purpose." Business contracts in this environment "became in fact quite often simply a dictation of peace (*"pactum," "pascisci"*) on the part of the stronger parties against the weaker ones. This applied in particular to the traffic in loans." Similarly, "price determination was left to free agreement," and that meant that "Taking advantage of a contracting party by another was permissible as far as the law was concerned."

In ancient Rome, free market capitalism led to the concentration of wealth into fewer and fewer hands, and that led to usury, which in turn led to financial distress and the disruption of economic exchange, which led in turn to dictatorship or Caesarism. The Roman response to the reckless fiscal policies which Rome's commitment to imperial expansion required was state socialism. "By the Edict of 301... Diocletian sought to check inflation and make goods cheap by fixing salaries and prices by decree. But, since he failed to stop the deterioration of money, prices and

salaries continued to rise in defiance of the law." Diocletian's recourse to tyranny preserved the empire for over a century "by adopting the methods and principles of eastern despotism and assuming outright control not only of the government, army, and administration but also of economic life throughout the empire," but this tyranny did nothing to check the spread of economic ruin because it did not attack the economic heart of the matter. Diocletian's tyranny and the persecutions that went along with it may have postponed the fall of the empire, but it did so "only . . . at the cost of making complete and irreparable the divorce of the state from its subjects, which deprived the Empire of the strength it needed when confronted, not long after, by the last mortal threat from outside." The final effect of Diocletian's "reforms" was to change the nature of the whole economy and supersede all free enterprise by strict state controls. Diocletian's legacy was to bequeath the worst of both worlds: totalitarian regulation superimposed over a debased currency that mocked his efforts at control. No laws, no matter how draconian, could compensate for an economic system that was based on usurious principles which concentrated wealth into fewer and fewer hands:

The inequality in the distribution of goods was the inescapable result of free commerce; and by virtue of the power of attraction which greater wealth has on smaller amounts of wealth there was time and again the situation where wealth flowed to those areas in which it had already accumulated to the greatest degree.

It was this hopeless economic situation which caused Pliny to cry out in despair: "Latifundia perdidere Roman."

The history of economic development in Florence was a microcosm of the history of economic development in the ancient world. In both instances, contempt for labor and the failure to pay a living wage combined with the lure of chrematistics led to the concentration of wealth in fewer and fewer hands, which led to banking as a way of putting that concentration of wealth to use. Banking then led to usury and usury then led to financial collapse, but not before the oligarchs had recourse to Caesarism and tyranny as stopgap measures. Lorenzo de' Medici was to Florence what Diocletian had been to Rome. In both ancient Rome and medieval Florence, the oligarchs sought to disguise the tyranny with spectacles to divert the



masses from their economic misery. In ancient Rome, this technique was known as bread and circuses. In Florence, it came to be known as the Renaissance. As Pesch put it,

Free enterprise and slavery and the moneyed oligarchy and pauperism which stemmed from that, had shaken ancient society to its foundation. The attempt was made to stem the threatening collapse by cheap food and amusement for the exploited masses of the people. And what more was there to do? For the moral force that was indispensable for moral reform was lacking in the pagan world.

Given the Greek and Roman attitude toward labor, as something that only slaves engaged in, there was something inevitable about this trajectory of economic development in the ancient world, but it needn't have happened in Florence. That's because the arrival of Christianity changed presuppositions which were the foundation for the economic system:

the Edict of Constantine introduced a new element into economic life: the Christian concept of the worth of the individual and by extension the worth of an individual's labor. This coupled with the

**It was this hopeless economic situation which caused Pliny to cry out in despair: "Latifundia perdidere Romam,"**

Church's condemnation of usury inaugurated a new economic era.

Once the Church became the organizing principle for Roman society, slaves took on a new dignity. One manifestation of that new dignity was that they were no longer treated as the property of their owners:

Now the slave families could no longer be separated, and the colonists were not to be sold across the limits of the province, and eventually not even off the property itself. Colonists and tenants, virtually the entire farm population, were thus tied to the land, no longer as a commodity which is traded off arbi-

trarily from area to area. The largest number of the slaves now have a homeland, and the bond of the family is secured.

From this point on, all economic development took place under the aegis of Christian principle, largely because "This new religion declared all—the powerful lords along with the lowly serfs—to be children of God." This elevation of status elevated the status of labor as well. With the advent of Christianity, society acquired a new "soul," which is to say, a new principle of unity:

The unity of society is not physical, but moral; i.e., there is a unity in the order of knowing and volition, a unity of intelligences and wills, of free actions and of moral obligations. If we call authority the "soul" of society, that too applies only in the moral sense.

If the new principle of unity for society was the moral order, all of human action became significant in a way unknown in the ancient world, and that meant that human labor gained in significance as well. The worker went from being an object or a tool to being, potentially at least, "the subject and goal of the economy and of economic activity—in continuous subordination to the law of Him who rules the world which He created not by some derivative right, but by an original, full sovereign right."

This was, indeed, good news and bound to have an effect on economic exchange:

How the oppressed and the impoverished of the time must have greeted such a message as their gospel! Humanity was to be reconstructed morally. The oppressive worldly appetite was to be exchanged for the uplifting of the moral will in freedom; self-seeking and the quest for dominion, for love and reciprocal willingness to serve; horrible exploitation for mercy and benevolence; slavery and the degradation of man for an esteem of the human person; the unrestrained sexual appetite for chastity and continence; the contempt for work for a high regard for it. From now on property ownership was rated as a gift provided by God, with man, established not as an absolute master, but merely as an administrator; and in fact not only for his own enjoyment but also for assisting others in





their need and for putting the love of man into action.

Once the Roman Empire had been freed of its bondage to the principles of free market capitalism, the Church could restructure social institutions in accord with their true nature in the created order, as opposed to the debased quality they had taken on under an unjust economic system. Both the family

and the individual regained the dignity with which their creator had originally endowed them. Christianity brought about the overthrow of the Leviathan state-fostered individualism of the pagan world. Society was no longer an anthill of enslaved individuals. It was now a moral organism, an idea which

represents the correct middle way between nominalistic-individualistic doctrine, according to which society is viewed in reality as merely the sum of its individual members, and the realistically extreme conception of biologism and socialism which sacrifices the individual to society and see him solely as a member or a comrade. As we have said, the association is the sum of the individuals who have their own purpose and are autonomous. . . . It embraces especially in political society those components of the social life of the politically united national community which we call "national economy." . . . It does this without at the same time abolishing their individual existence and freedom.

Instead of egotism leading to the war of all against all and the triumph of the strong over the weak, the Christian successor to the Roman Empire could now integrate two natural forms of community, the family and the state, into an organic unity, where mutual collaboration or solidarity became the social norm. The ancient world was based on force applied from the top down. The Christian world which succeeded it was based upon the natural order, which found expression in natural institutions like the family, liberated from an exploitative economic system. Under the system of free market capitalism promoted by the Roman oligarchs, the slave family could be broken down and looted for parts. After that system collapsed, the Church gradually established a social order based on the family as the first cell of society. The new Germanic-Christian society which succeeded the Roman Empire was "rooted in nature itself," because it was based on the family, which bound

people together on the basis of reciprocal rights and obligations. As such, it turns out to be the basis of the physical, intellectual, and the moral existence of the human race, and the basic cell of all natural social life. It was the historical starting point for all socio-organic structures in the natural order, up to and including the state, and it will always continue to be that, as well as the stable foundation for happiness and well-being.

Basing society on the cooperation intrinsic to family life rather than the manipulation of conflict between individuals led to social stability of a sort unknown in the ancient world, and that stability led to increased productivity:

The need to provide food, clothing and shelter for a number of persons in a common economy naturally inclines the family to settle down in a stable situation; and it leads to the establishment of a home which, in turn, binds it solidly to the homeland, the fatherland. . . . "Wherever a nation, like the nomads of former times or the Indians of America did not have the ambition to take root in native soil and build houses for their families, it was insignificant in the pages of history. With the establishment of a home, you get the beginning of culture, and with domesticity, civilization begins."

The Christian view of society as a moral-organic unit based on the family as its primary cell offered



protection against both absolutism and individualism because 1) it saw the state, as such, as a necessary form of society based on the natural law and not on the arbitrary actions of individuals, because 2) it linked the purpose of the state with the idea of moral obligation, and because 3) it saw the state as stemming from the family, and also because of its insistence on the solidarity principle which stands opposed to every kind of mechanical-individualistic concept of society.

### III

The Ciompi rebellion may not have brought about lasting economic reform, but the fact that it did not end in a mass of brutal crucifixions, as the Spartacus revolt had in ancient Rome, was largely the result of the ameliorating effect of Christianity. Christianity had had an ameliorating effect on the revolutionaries as well.

The economic realism at the heart of the Ciompi rebellion was largely the work of Michele Lando. When revolution returned to Florence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Lando's supporters had a statue erected in his honor, ignoring the fact that their view of revolution

## The economic realism at the heart of the Ciompi rebellion was largely the work of Michele Lando.

was fundamentally different than his. Lando, unlike the true revolutionaries who came after him,

had great restraining influence over his own party, and by the exercise of his personal ascendancy, and also, it must be added by the use of his physical strength, he succeeded in moderating the demands of his followers and preventing any wanton destruction or even much disorder at all.

As with every revolution, excess on the part of some undermined the fundamentally reasonable nature of the Ciompi demands and led to reaction. After the Ciompi were granted some initial concessions, power reverted to the Florentine oligarchs who continued the same policies which led to revolution in the first place. According to Cohn,

The great reversal in workers' rights came not with the defeat of the Eight of Santa Maria Novella at the beginning of September 1378 but on 19 January 1382, when the soldiers of the wool guild and the patricians toppled the Government of the Minor Guilds. The new government immediately outlawed the two remaining revolutionary guilds of dyers and doublet makers and their affiliates and re-established the status quo that the wool guild and patricians had enjoyed before the constitutional reforms of Salvestro de' Medici in June 1378. In the words of the anonymous diarist of the Machiavelli family: "The deal was done; from now on all those artisans who previously had been underlings (sottoposti) would again be underlings, subject to the councils of their guilds and to the guildsmen's will."

Stefani, the Ciompi chronicler, claims that the rebellion failed

when the artisans of the lesser guilds, a little more mature politically and grounded in a different sort of economics, broke with the rebels. In the end the economically important guilds were again established with their upper stratum of capitalistic, commercial and financial families.

When Francesco Guicciardini wrote his *History of Florence*, he dismissed the notion that the lower classes were in any real sense in charge of their own rebellion.

The cause of the rebellion was not legitimate economic grievance but rather the machinations of The Eight of War, who "cultivated the favor of the lower classes and brought about this uprising not so that the Ciompi might become masters of the city, but rather to use them as tools to destroy their powerful enemies, so that they, the Eight, might remain at the helm of government."

Guicciardini's verdict has more to do with his elitist *Weltanschauung* (or dare we say prejudices) than the economic facts of life in Florence in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. The Ciompi Rebellion was one of many proletarian revolutions which swept over Europe during the latter part of the 14<sup>th</sup> century in reaction to economic changes brought about by the rise of the wool industry and nascent capitalism. The Rev. Bede Jarrett, O.P.,





claims that during this period “the spirit . . . of lawlessness and revolt was abroad all over the West.” Like the Ciompi rebellion in Florence, the peasant revolt led by Wat Tyler in England “was rather symptomatic of a European movement.” It was preceded by the Jacquerie rebellion of the 1350s in France and followed by another rebellion when the Mallotins rose there again in 1382.

In 1508-9, when he wrote his *History of Florence*, Guicciardini saw Florence descending into chaos once again after a golden age of law and order at the hands of “the wise and the well-to-do.” He was referring, of course, to the era of Medici rule in Florence. Francesco Guicciardini was born on March 6, 1483. He was nine years old when Lorenzo de’ Medici died. He was 11 when Lorenzo’s unfortunate son Piero fled in disgrace and Medici rule in Florence came to an end. He was 15 years old when Savonarola’s body was burned in the Piazza della Signoria and his ashes scattered over the Arno. The splendor of Florence in the 1480s (both remembered and experienced first hand) blinded Guicciardini to the economic causes of that city’s decline, a decline which was already in progress when Michele Lando led the Ciompi in their rebellion a century before.

Those less blinded by splendor of Florentine culture in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century saw an economic common denominator that linked what was happening there to what was happening elsewhere in Europe at the time. Like Bede Jarrett, Odd Langholm sees an economic common denominator underlying all of the rebellions:

The latter years of the 14<sup>th</sup> century saw all over Europe violent movements of the non-privileged masses, all asserting the equality of men and demanding higher wages and better working condi-

tions. The most famous and the most violent were the Peasants’ Revolt led by Wat Tyler in England and the Jacquerie, led by Etienne Marcel in France.

In the fourteenth century popular revolts, by peasants or artisans or both, were common in parts of Europe, including England, France, Burgundy, Italy and Germany. The unrest was aggravated by famine and plague, particularly the Black Death (1348-9) which ravaged all of Europe, but the cause was ultimately economic: “At the root of this trouble, as at the root of the English revolt, was certainly an economic grievance, the scarcity of wages, the dearth of provisions, and the immemorial bondage which custom imposed upon the worker.”

In 1401 the Signoria solicited designs for the second gates of the Florentine Baptistery. The response to this competition marked the beginning of the Renaissance, whose sculpture, created by artists like Brunelleschi, Donatello and Ghiberti was based on ancient models. The fundamental conflict in Florence in 1400, which is to say, at the beginning of the Renaissance, was whether the Florentines should turn to other ancient models as well. Was economic life, for example, to be based on Christian or pagan models? Would Florence return to the pagan era and all that entailed economically or would she perdure in the Christian religion and work out a new science of economic life based on Christian principles? As in sculpture, so in economics, the Renaissance meant a return to paganism, but the Church was not going to allow this without contestation.

As Guicciardini’s *History* indicates, after the failure of the Ciompi rebellion, economic truth in Florence became, in the words of Thrasymachus, the opinion of the powerful. What was good for the Florentine equivalent of General Motors, which is to say, the big guilds and the bankers involved in the wool industry, was perceived as good for Florence. In Guicciardini’s eyes “the wise and the well-to-do” were one and the same group of people, a group which was well-to-do because they were wise and wise because they were well-to-do. Guicciardini and the Florentine oligarchs failed to understand that the Ciompi rebellion offered them an opportunity to learn some basic truths about the as-of-then-yet-to-be-invented science of economics. The political reaction which followed the rebellion was some indication that certain lessons would never be learned.



In 14<sup>th</sup> century Italy, industry meant turning wool into cloth. Florentine cloth manufacture reached its zenith about 1350. Clothing was the first European industry, and it gave rise to the money economy as well as advances in keeping track of money and the organization of labor. The wool industry facilitated commerce as well, because the areas best suited for the production of wool were not necessarily the areas best suited for the manufacture of cloth. The best wool, the so-called Garbo wool, came from the Castilian tableland, where for centuries there was no cloth manufacturing. On the other hand:

the major centers of the medieval woolen industry—Flanders, Brabant, and northern France, certain towns of southern France, Lombardy, Venetia and Tuscany—did not derive their superiority from local flocks or pastures so much as from their trade, which enable them to import choice wools easily, even from a distance.

The wool industry, which was in place by the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, facilitated the division of labor, which increased productivity. According to Schulte,

No medieval industry dissolved into such a number of successive tasks, performed by different persons, as the preparation of woolen goods. . . . Gaul provided the greatest variety of colored cloths; and the people who were looking for novelty took a fancy to the many colors. Flanders, where everyone made his

## **The medieval cloth industry was the source of modern economic development.**

material according to his own taste and sense of color sent to Germany its green and dark blue cloths for clothing the nobility, which did not know how to make such colors. However, even here we were not completely at a loss. The Rhine area produced lightweight black cloths for monks and nuns, the Swabians produced red cloth where the color was not dyed in the wool; and along the Danube materials with natural colors that were weather repellent (loden) were produced, than which there is no better cloth in all of Germany. . . .

Division of labor naturally fostered commerce. The medieval cloth industry was the source of modern economic development. The manufacture of wool cloth enabled a gradual transition from the natural economy to the city economy because it did not require a large capital outlay. The same process that was necessary to produce cloth for home consumption could simply be extended, and the surplus could be offered for sale on the international market, which fostered the circulation of money. The fact that different regions of Europe produced different kinds of wool and, therefore, woolen cloth that served different needs led to increased commerce. The cloth produced in one region was desirable in other regions because each type of wool had unique qualities. The wool industry also fostered commerce because:

A cloth merchant, in order to satisfy all of his customers, had to provide commodities coming from a vast variety of sources. And just as he himself got his woven goods from far away, his producers had to provide for sales at great distances.

Commerce as of the 11<sup>th</sup> century meant traveling to fairs like the famous fair of Champagne with bags of money and/or bolts of cloth.

In the large-scale export of northern cloth to the south and southeast, either from the centres of production or through the fairs of Champagne, Italian merchants were the most active and enterprising agents; and it was mainly due to them that northern draperies . . . were able to reach the principal markets of the Mediterranean. From the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards, a growing number of "Lombard" merchants frequented the markets of France and the Low Countries, and this they did for the primary purpose of buying cloth. Indeed, the whole class of greater merchants in Italy built up their business and economic power on the local sale and re-export of foreign textiles.

The fairs allowed the small merchant to transcend the limitations of local markets, but they brought with them other difficulties, most of which had to do with the dangers associated with travel:

The journey from Florence to Naples. . . bristled with difficulties and dangers. . . . The shortest route from Rome to Naples, the road through Terracina, had such an evil reputation that only troops and public of-



ficials dared to use it while all trade went round by sea.

Couriers could travel by post horses from Venice to Bruges in seven or eight days, but "It took four months, on an average, to transport a bale of cloth from Flanders to Florence." This system was eventually superseded when the merchants began to work with agents and correspondents and eventually developed the letter of credit, a Florentine invention. Manufacturing on this scale required unprecedented sophistication in the organization of both labor and finance. Increased commerce led to the need for increasingly sophisticated forms of payment and book-keeping. The new methods of trade developed by the Italian city states, "especially the growing tendency to do business by correspondence," revolutionized commerce during the latter part of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The bill of exchange made it possible to transfer purchasing power from place to place without the shipping of actual coins. As a result,

It became unnecessary for the merchants to convey their goods themselves and to travel in armed caravans. Goods could safely be entrusted to specialized common carriers on land as well as on sea. The development of maritime insurance made it possible to shift the sea risk to underwriters instead of dividing that risk by chartering space on several different ships.

The cloth industry, in particular, "the finishing operations, applied to the woven cloth—cleansing fulling, tentering, rinsing, shearing, dressing and dyeing," demanded "a complex organization and a substantial advance of capital." In small operations, one man could perform all of the above-mentioned tasks and could ask for payment in advance:

But in big towns, where production was largely for export and a fairly long period was bound to elapse between the purchase of the raw materials and the sale of the finished goods, the whole organization was inevitably dependent on capitalist entrepreneurs, who could pay all or most of the cost in advance, and also market the cloth.

Advances in commercial technology, however, were not matched by an equally sophisticated understanding of the role which labor played in the economy. Workers in Florence were hostages to the wool industry, an industry whose techniques were considered state secrets. Wages were kept low as a way of keep-

ing prices down and making Florentine fabrics relatively cheap in an increasingly competitive market, but at the same time workers were denied permission to work anywhere else. The Florentine economy had at its heart a number of double standards: gold Florins, which were never debased, were used by the oligarchs in foreign trade, but silver pennies, which were constantly debased, served as wages for the working poor. Merchants and bankers enjoyed unprecedented commercial opportunities, but the Florentine worker was little more than a servant indentured to the wool industry of the town where he lived. Like their Roman predecessors, the Florentine oligarchs chose oppressive taxation as the preferred way of paying for foreign wars and excessive regulation as their way of dealing with an essentially crooked currency and economy.

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## ECONOMIC PROTECTION

The more skilled workers and managers were members of guilds like the *Arte della Lana*, and the guilds afforded them a measure of economic protection. But neither they nor the day-laboring proletariat were allowed to sell their skills for a higher price in other cities nor were they allowed to organize into unions as a way of getting better pay, something which spawned numerous abuses. Unscrupulous employers could pay their workers in truck, which is to say, with the materials which they themselves had produced but which their employers were not able to sell on the open market. Far from being organizations which represented the rights of the working man, guilds like the *Arte della lana* worked hand in glove with capitalist interests. The Marchionne di Coppia di Stefani, chronicler of the Ciompi uprising, claims "that the preponderance of big capital in the '*Arte della lana*' was forcing the smaller businesses 'to sell on credit' since otherwise they could find no customers even by lowering their prices." These same employers could also lower the wages of the proletariat with impunity:

The Commune's labor policy was based on the assumption that enough labor was always available, and that wages should be kept low to prevent any rise in prices. Occasionally, workmen were forbidden to take up posts abroad in case the "secret" should leak out; and again the State sometimes tried to attract workmen from abroad. . . . The commune would not countenance any formation of cartels which might threaten home prices.



Low wages were the norm not only for the urban proletariat laboring in the wool trade, but also for the peasants who supplied the city of Florence with its food. "The prices of agricultural produces were purposely kept low by various means." Low wages in the countryside not only kept the price of food down, they also served to promote immigration to the cities, which led to an oversupply of labor there, which also helped to further depress wages and keep the prices of the finished textile products low. The idea of low prices appealed to the cloth manufacturers, because it appeals to every manufacturer in a capitalist culture, but the interests of the oligarch capitalists were, as they were to learn the hard way, only a part of the economic picture, and economics as a science must of necessity deal with the whole picture, because if it does not then it is not economic science.

Low wages led to other problems. The migration of workers to the city kept industrial wages low by keeping the supply of labor high, but it inadvertently led to low labor supply in agriculture, which, *ceteris paribus*, should have led to an increase of wages in the agricultural sector. But other things were not equal, and the state, guided by the interests of capital, stepped in at this point and insured that "The cultivation of the land had to be enforced by law." The Florentine economy, as a result, began to resemble the worst of both worlds: the brave new world of Capitalism for the rich, based on unprecedent commercial opportunities plus advances in financial technology leading to unheard of profits, and the slave economy of the Roman Empire for the poor.

The Church was not slow in condemning what it saw as the avarice of the capitalists. Indeed, the entire 15<sup>th</sup> century can be seen as one long jeremiad against greed preached by Dominicans and Franciscans, but no one was looking at the issues from the point of view of an integrated economic science, because such a science did not exist at this time. The Church, as a result, was quick to condemn usury, but slow to understand the role that wages play in the economy. The mendicant preachers who condemned usury and its effect on the urban proletariat failed to see that recourse to usury was symptomatic of deeper problems. It was a function of low wages, excessive taxation, and a debased currency. If they had a science of economics that explained the value and role of labor in the economy, the Mendicants would have seen

that "From the point of view of the national economy low wages which harm the economy are most uneconomic," even if "private economic units are seldom elated over the higher costs which higher wages imply."

In order to remain competitive with other Italian city states in a situation like this, Florence began to adopt ad hoc protectionist measures, but nothing seemed to stem the downward spiral of economic decline, because nothing they did addressed the fundamental problem, namely, the contempt for labor which Florence had inherited from the ancient world, a contempt which took on new life with the arrival of the Renaissance in the city of flowers. In order to cut costs, the guilds eventually began to cut back on the quality of their goods. High import duties then got added to protect local industry, which was now turning out inferior products, against foreign competition. The Florentine oligarchs attempted to deal with increased competition in the garment industry by establishing regulations which favored the interests of the silk industry. But the regulations were not in the interests of the workers in that industry, and therefore not in the interest of the economy as a whole, because skilled artisans were "forbidden to manufacture . . . brocades and silk . . . and looms anywhere but in Florence, or to form a society for that purpose on pain of death and the seizure of property."

At the heart of the Florentine economy lay a large double standard. The oligarchs could manipulate the labor market in their interest, but the worker was forbidden by state regulation to improve his wages by entering the labor market which valued his skills. Rather than remedy the injustice at the heart of the Florentine labor market, the oligarchs who defeated the Ciompi sought to keep them underpaid through "prohibitive regulations," which "became much more frequent about 1450":

In 1458 the import of every sort of product from Italian cloth firms was forbidden. It was a question of helping production at home and stopping the flow of money in cash from Florence. Even in those times it was stressed in argument that the production of cloth was dying out and the people were suffering want and privation.

As a result,

Widespread smuggling became common. As early as 1460, at least the cheaper kinds of foreign clothes



were allowed to be introduced into the neighborhood of Pisa and Leghorn. In 1466 the import of lesser woolen materials which the population needed, was again permitted, since a great scarcity had been felt in stuffs necessary for clothing purposes, especially those which were not produced in Florence at all.

The Signoria then tried to save the textile industry via import duties: "In 1441 Flemish and English goods which did not arrive on Florentine ships were subjected to a special tax of 8 percent besides the usual duty." But protective tariffs combined with low wages only accelerated the decline of the industry which the oligarchs were attempting to save. When decline proceeded apace, the Signoria experimented with abolishing export duties:

In 1478 the Signoria ruled: "since the silk trade is practiced so little and the cloth trade not much more, with the result that a part of the population who depended on these trades for their livelihood, is reduced to great want, to begging and the asking of alms, the export duties on Florentine wool and silk products will be abolished as an experimental measure." Sanguine hopes of recovery through isolation had not then been fulfilled. But by 1480, this measure—for fiscal reasons—had again been put aside.

Fiddling with tariffs produced no beneficial results because the heart of the issue was wages. The oligarchs were handicapped in dealing with the situation because they didn't understand that low wages invariably lead to economic decline by crippling demand, something that cannot be remedied by selling in foreign markets. Blinded by their own self-interest, the oligarchs were unable to address the real issue. Low wages crippled demand, which ultimately led inexorably to economic decline, and no amount of protective legislation could halt that decline.

The economic fact which the Florentine oligarchs never learned is that "Wages . . . cannot be regarded as costs from the point of view of the national economy." Since the science of economics is the science of exchange, something which invariably involves two parties, defining it solely in the interest of only one of those parties, as the Florentine oligarchs did in the wake of the Ciompi rebellion, gave an inaccurate idea of what needed to be done, which over the long run led inexorably to economic decline. Capitalism in its nascent form blinded the Florentine oligarchs to

the fact that "workers are a part of the nation." Hence, "from the standpoint of the national economy, the wage counts as part of the national income and not part of economic costs."

Furthermore, the accumulation of gold at the expense of the worker blinded the Florentine oligarchs to the fact that labor is the only thing that can turn money into wealth. Money, as the scholastics had learned from Aristotle, was sterile. By constantly driving down wages, the Florentine oligarchs were inadvertently destroying their ability to create wealth by making it impossible for the worker to reproduce, which is to say, to form the families which are the primary cell of the economy. Low wages were the chemotherapy which stopped the replication of cells in the Florentine body politic and body economic.

As a result, the system kept failing, and no one could explain why. At the same time, the same oligarchs were blinded by the lure of chrematistics and usury (via the nascent banking industry) and therefore moved to contradict Aristotle and the scholastics when they claimed that money was not sterile after all. Proof of that was the return on usury, which they also failed to understand as totally illusory over the long haul no matter how lucrative it seemed in the short term.

The economic policies of the Florentine oligarchs were based on keeping prices low because that allowed them to undercut their competitors. What they failed to see is that their self-interest contradicted the common good, and as a result it undercut the development of the local economy. Economists born after the publication of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* have been blinded by his glorification of self-interest as the mainspring of the economy. The Florentine oligarchs weren't blinded by this ideology; they were simply blind. Theirs was not a willful choice of ideology over reality. They simply did not understand that when reduction of private economic costs entails the reduction of wages, "private economic interest in no way corresponds to the national economic interest." They did not know that price is an ancillary good, nor did they understand that the lowest price is not the best price because even:

Assuming that the reduction of production costs is actually reflected in lower prices, what good are the lower prices if the purchasing power, the ability of the great masses of people to pay, has been decreased?



More importantly, they did not know that:

To strive for an increase in the national income ... simply by increasing entrepreneurial profit ... will not work. Wherever such increase takes place by unduly cutting workers' income, it represents misfortune for the national economy. A populace which lives in poverty and misery finds even cheap goods too expensive.

By holding down wages as a way of keeping prices low, the Florentine oligarchs thwarted the development of the economy. If the Florentine oligarchs wanted to turn the economy around, they should have applied "all their energies to reducing economic costs, while paying good wages to their workers." Instead of forbidding all cartels, the Signoria should have allowed the workers to organize in order to keep wages high. By allowing the workers involved in the Ciompi rebellion to organize, the Signoria would have been doing nothing more than conforming the economic system in Florence with important economic realities, e.g., the fact that "It is hard for the worker, when engaging in a conflict with his employer to gain the upper hand" because, then as now, "Coalitions of masters, whose numbers are smaller, ... find it easier to

**"Wages ... cannot be regarded as costs from the point of view of the national economy."**

organize. The law does not forbid these, but it often does forbid the workers to organize. 'We have no acts of parliament against combining to lower the price of work; but many against combining to raise it.'"

But the most important point of all is the moral of the tale of King Midas, a piece of ancient culture which made no impact on the mind of the Florentine oligarchs. If they had taken the time to ponder this bit of ancient wisdom, they would have understood that gold and value are not synonymous. Labor is the only "philosopher's stone" which can turn money into wealth. If the oligarchs depress wages enough, they will thereby wreck the economy's ability to turn money into wealth because without workers there is

no work. This truth, unfortunately, only becomes apparent (if it become apparent at all) over the long haul when, because of lack of sustenance, the worker fails to reproduce. "There is ... a definite rate below which the wage for even the least skilled labor cannot fall over the long run." When the wage is not "sufficient to at least provide subsistence on a continuing basis for the worker and his family" the economy breaks down and can no longer produce wealth no matter how much gold the wealthy have accumulated. When the oligarchs failed to allow for the payment of a decent wage after co-opting the Ciompi rebellion, they set in motion the forces that eventuated in irreversible economic decline.

Pesch claims that "It is not in the richest countries that the wage will be the highest, but in nations which are in the process of rapid development toward becoming rich." But the converse is also true. Nations where the wages are highest are also nations which are in the process of becoming rich.

Once the Florentine oligarchs appropriated all surplus value from the worker by paying him a subsistence wage, money began to accumulate in their hands, and once money began to accumulate, they began lending it out at usury, and once they lent it out at usury, the money was gone, ultimately never to return, which they learned to their chagrin when the princes who were the Medici's principal debtors all defaulted on their loans. Piero the Gouty, Cosimo's son, discovered that truth the hard way when he tried to call in loans after his father's

death. Once it became apparent that that money was gone forever, Piero's son, Lorenzo the Magnificent, kept the Medici enterprise (and the Florentine economy) going for a while by a combination of theft (from his relatives and the Florentine treasury) and Caesarism, with a liberal dose of bread and circuses thrown in to keep the masses in the dark about what was really happening.

Ultimately, the Florentine oligarchs were stymied by the fact that they could not distinguish between economics and chrematistics, which is to say, the pursuit of gold. Those who fail to understand the difference are also going to be blind to the fact that "The interests of the individual economic unit ... come into



confrontation with the interest of the national economy."

Economics is a practical science. It is part of what Immanuel Kant called practical reason, which means that its purpose is to achieve the good, rather than the truth, which is the goal of pure reason. Practical reason begins with ethics, which is the science of how the individual achieves the good. It culminates in politics, which is the science of how the state achieves the good. The science of how the household (or city state or national economy) achieves the good is known as economics, a term which derives from *nomos*, meaning "law" and *oikos*, the Greek word for household. The ultimate goal of economics is the good of the whole nation. Each person should benefit from the economy according to his own participation in it, but that remuneration finds its lower limit in the living wage or the just wage or the family wage, one which allows a worker to raise a family.

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## THE ECONOMIC PRINCIPLE

By and large, the "economic principle" (minimum input with maximum output) consists simply in the application of a universal law of practical reason to the exchange of goods and services. Since it is part of practical reason, economics cannot contradict ethics. This means that actions which are immoral are ultimately self-defeating from an economic point of view, because it means cheating a fellow member of the national economy, the exploiter may enrich himself but he only does so at the expense of the economy as a whole. The other corollary of the principle that economics must be conformant to practical reason is that it cannot be an instinct, "self-interest," or a passion because if it were it would not be reasonable. Furthermore, there is always

a danger that these spontaneous natural drives [pace, Adam Smith] can become dominant in human endeavor and lead to unrestrained covetousness. It is the continuing task of human reason and of the moral law which regulates all human ambition and action, to guard the instincts and instinctive life against straying from man's natural purpose and from going beyond the limits of moderation as called for by reason and morality. . . . Human reason and conscience. . . are more important than all of the impulses of our natural instincts.

Economics is a science but it is not a science like physics: "The future here cannot be predicted here with anything like the certitude with which the astronomers can tell us about future eclipses of the sun and moon." Rather, ethics is to economics what mathematics is to physics:

The physicist takes over propositions from mathematics without ceasing to be a physicist. The very nature of the formal object of his science forces the economist to take into account truths of juridical, technical and natural sciences. Why should ethics be an exception to this rule? . . . economics . . . is an ethical science in the sense that we regard all of the sciences that deal with free human actions as ethical sciences. Therefore, it must have due regard for the moral law governing free human actions. But that does not make it a branch of ethics as such. It has its own formal object: the proper economic arrangement and direction of human actions and institutions. . . their purposeful direction with reference to the material general welfare of the nation.

Because it is part of practical reason, economics can't dispense with the "ought." Economics deals with what is economically good and proper:

economics deals with the performance of the person acting as a rational, free, moral being as influenced by various needs which call for satisfaction, albeit in the face of a limitation of the material goods and labor capacities available for satisfying those wants, and in competition with persons who have similar needs for the means to satisfy those wants.

Because economics is a branch of practical reason and because it exists to achieve the good, the conclusions of a sound economics "must remain in harmony with the moral law." Nowhere else does the golden rule ("Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.") apply more than in the field of economics, and this is so because the golden rule involves a transaction. Similarly, "man does not economize in isolation [like Robinson Crusoe] but in the framework of society. . . . The material object of economics. . . the economic life of a politically unified nation." To abstract the interests of one party from that transaction and make them the norm of economic activity, as the Florentine oligarchs did, is a recipe for economic decline:

Economics is not entitled to present what is morally impossible as scientifically established truth, any



more than it can propose what is physically impossible. Gladstone's saying that what is morally false cannot be politically correct applies equally in the area of economics. . . . Economics is not: "the science of how to increase wealth in whatever way possible. If that were the case, it would have to include among its methods also deception, theft, and the plunder of conquered people. But where can you find an economist who has the gall to propose that?"

At the University of Chicago, perhaps? Milton Friedman made a career out of advising government elites how to loot their own economies and impoverish their own citizens. This caused untold woe in places like Chile and Bolivia but the greatest woe of all was done to the science of economics, by turning it into something between chrematistics and a manual on how to succeed at looting. There is no question that the techniques promoted by the Chicago Boys can fill the pockets of their benefactors with money, but they can only accomplish this at the expense of a sound economy because "The economy" refers to the sum total of the kinds of human transactions, relationships, institutions which serve the purpose, in an ongoing and systematic, orderly manner, of providing a person or a group of persons on a continuing basis or at least for a particular period of time, e.g., a fiscal period with the material things which are needed to satisfy their wants and which are directly related in this manner to realizing the material side of human welfare.

Throughout history the prime danger for any state has always been to reduce the science of economics to the interests of the rich and powerful. This decision invariably leads to the oppression of the worker, which leads to concentration of wealth, which leads to usury, which leads to collapse. The economy must be in harmony with reason, and that means in harmony with the moral imperative, and that entails recognition of the fact that human work is the only thing that can turn money into wealth, and, therefore, that it lies at the foundation of the economy. Money exists for the sake of work, not vice versa. Money, as the scholastics knew, is sterile. It can only be made fertile by human effort, which is another word for work. That means that without decent remuneration for work, any

economy is doomed to fail.

Economic policy according to which one class benefits at the expense of another, as was the case in Florence after the failure of the Ciompi uprising to bring lasting reform, is a form of looting, not economic development. Cheating the worker out of a living wage is self-defeating behavior for any polity, but once the oligarchs of Florence regained power in the wake of Ciompi rebellion, they made driving down wages, which was in their interest but not in the interest of Florence, the cornerstone of domestic economic policy. Both the cause and the effect of the rebellions of the 14<sup>th</sup> century were usury, but it was usury understood in the widest sense of the term, something which included interest on loans but was not limited to that practice. Usury involved the extortion of gain in both wages and prices as well. The fundamental unit of all economic life is the transaction. In any transaction, the stronger party will invariably be tempted to take advantage of the weaker. If he does so, this is usury. So violation of the requirement to pay a just wage is an example of usury, as is forcing someone to pay or accept an unjust price, as is taking interest on a loan, which places the burden of risk on the weaker party, which is almost invariably the borrower. Usury in the broadest sense of the term, i.e., depriving the worker of a living wage, i.e. twice that of a subsistence wage, led over the course of the centuries to usury in the narrow sense of the term, i.e., exorbitant interest on loans because when the appropriation of surplus value led to the concentration of wealth in the hands of the commercial elite, the only thing that elite could think of to do with its money was lend it out at usurious rates of interest.

The Ciompi rebellion was symptomatic of economic disorder in an age which had no science of economics and, therefore, no way of distinguishing between policies which were good, bad or indifferent. There was no distinction between Chrematistics, the accumulation of gold, and the science of economics. Once the Florentine oligarchs regained their power, their interests, not the common good, became the economic norm for Florence. As a result the unhindered pursuit of self-interest led to the decline and fall of Florence as the pre-eminent economic powerhouse of 15<sup>th</sup> century Europe.



# *Caritas in Veritate* the Just Wage and Economic Democracy

By Rupert J. Ederer

In case there were lingering doubts about whether the *just wage doctrine* as first presented for the context of modern capitalistic society by Pope Leo XIII in 1891 is still considered relevant by the Catholic Church, Pope Benedict XVI, following a pattern of thought established by his immediate predecessor Venerable John Paul II, laid that concern to rest in his first social encyclical. It was widely expected that *Caritas in Veritate* would pummel the banks along with usury as it is institutionalized in modern financial practice; and it did that. After that was said and done, however, the Pope returned in his wide-ranging encyclical (63), to what one may without hesitation regard as a central issue in *Rerum Novarum*, the very first social encyclical addressed to the economic order. To be sure, Pope Leo XIII had opened his own labor encyclical with a significant warning about how the condition confronting the workers was aggravated by what he called “rapacious usury” (RN 2). This suggests that they are all cut from the same cloth, these social encyclicals — a vast cloth involving the *Seventh Commandment* as presented in the magisterial *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. It is also important to recognize that what the German pope, like his predecessors, has to say about such matters transcends the boundaries of conserva-

tism, liberalism, socialism, and all the other ideological humbugs of our time. In the United States, these would include the standard flatulent pretensions stemming from run-of-the-mill Democratic and Republican party politics.

That the original message by Leo XIII in 1891 fell largely on deaf ears should surprise no one; it was delivered to the world during the heyday of liberal capitalism. For that pope to state that the worker’s wages

**By 1931, Pope Pius XI felt compelled to present principles for the reconstruction of the social order in its darkest hours.**

must be “...sufficient to enable him to maintain himself his wife, and his children in reasonable and frugal comfort,” and that they should make it possible for him also “to put by a little property” (RN 36), seemed fair enough to many. Nevertheless it clashed with plutocratic capitalism which was the prevailing economic system then as now. By and large the economic framework was such that even the most benevolent capitalist entrepreneur who read his Bible and wished to be fair to his workers could not rely on his competitors to behave accordingly. In other words, he was immersed in the rough-and-tumble *free market*, where the prevailing *free competition* among rival marketeers — hence

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Rupert Ederer is professor of economics emeritus and translator of Heinrich Pesch





the expression, *liberal* capitalism, — made such decent behavior improvident, unlikely, and eventually self-destructive. The outlook for the rank and file workers was bleak since, by and large, they had nothing to sell but their labor. The socialists, sensing the injustice, exploited the resultant plight of the workers urging them to hate and eventually eradicate the owning class — the capitalists — in the process of expropriating their capital. The Catholic Church, which could condone neither class hatred nor the abolition of private ownership of productive property, somewhat belatedly proposed what were some basic norms for humanizing the economic system. Eventually that would involve substantial reform of the existing system on the basis of the *principle of solidarity* (cf. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* 38-40; *Centesimus Annus* 10), along with the just wage for workers who comprise the preponderant majority of producers (*Laborem Exercens* 88), instead of class antagonism or destructive competition among the various producers.

By 1931, Pope Pius XI felt compelled to present principles for the reconstruction of the social order in its darkest hours. In 1929 the stock markets had collapsed worldwide followed by banking systems which

were until then still based tenuously on man's long enchantment by precious metals — what the British economist, John Maynard Keynes, termed the *Auri Sacra Fames*. Unemployment spread worldwide, and in the United States it soon reached its all-time record level near 25%. Dictatorships emerged in certain European countries; and the United States too undertook definitive steps away from the free market into what came to be called the *New Deal*. Although President Franklin D. Roosevelt was a Protestant in a predominantly Protestant country, certain teachings presented by Pope Pius XI in *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) had significant influence on his thinking and on legislation passed during his tenure as president.

Although it has been scarcely recognized even now, the *National Industrial Recovery Act* passed in 1933 was an early attempt to establish something remotely akin to the “*ordines*” Pius XI had proposed in *Quadragesimo Anno*, variously translated as “functional” or “vocational groups” (Q.A. 81-87). The NIRA provided for the establishment of a system of self-governing codes drawn up by and for the various industries. These were intended to control certain competitive practices that had, among other things, made decent treatment of workers difficult. They would therefore protect the workers in their right to organize, and guarantee a minimum level of wages while establishing 40 hours as the standard workweek. After the U.S. Supreme Court declared this measure unconstitutional in 1935, other laws were passed which salvaged those aspects of the NIRA: respectively, the *National Labor Relations Act* (1935), and the *Fair Labor Standards Act* (1938). Unnoticed by most, such social legislation incorporated substantial elements of what Pope Leo XIII and Pius XI proposed in *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno* respectively. Indeed it has also passed largely unnoticed that during the most recent economic collapse (2008) in the United States, people benefited much from certain safeguards installed during the Great Depression, like unemployment insurance and the federal program to insure bank deposits.

Few would claim that the *Fair Labor Standards Act*, known also as the *Wages and Hours Law* and colloquially as the *minimum wage law*, as it exists today measures up to what Pope Leo XIII and Pius XI meant by a *just wage* in their encyclicals. Placed in the context of the time when it was first passed, however, one could make a case for a similar intention. Leo XIII wrote



originally in 1891 in paragraphs 33 or 35 (depending on which translation one uses): "... there is a dictate of nature more imperious and more ancient than any bargain between man and man, that the remuneration must be enough to support the wage-earner in reasonable and frugal comfort." That is qualified further in the following paragraph: "If the workingman's wage be sufficient to enable him comfortably to support himself, his wife, and his children he will find it easy, if he be a sensible man, to practice thrift, and he will not fail by cutting down expenses, to put by some little savings and thus secure a modest source of income." (An earlier translation terms this latter feature as: "to put by a little property"). The essence therefore involves adequate support for the worker, his wife, and his children, i.e. it is a *family wage*; and it also makes possible modest ownership, i.e., it must be a *saving wage*. Those were the "nuts and bolts," of the just wage doctrine as first presented in *Rerum Novarum*. When he commemorated its fortieth anniversary in 1931, Pius XI reaffirmed the two requirements put in place there, but he also elaborated significantly on the doctrine as first presented by Leo XIII.

In *Quadragesimo Anno* we have the provision: "that the propertyless wage earner be placed in such circumstances that by skill and thrift he can acquire a certain moderate ownership ..." (63). That was followed by the same requirements as contained in *Rerum Novarum* worded here as, "a sufficient wage adequate to meet ordinary domestic needs;" also, "...the wage paid to the workingman should be sufficient for the support of himself and his family" (71). Pius XI added an appropriate "word of praise for various systems devised and attempted in practice, by which an increased wage is paid in view of increased family burdens" (71). Such systems, designated now as *family allowances*, are and have long been in effect in many of the advanced economies of the world. They are administered by governments, thus averting certain complexities that manifest themselves where well-meaning individual employers attempt (as some have) to provide such family allowances on their own. For example, during hard times discrimination in hiring against workers with larger families would be likely to present a problem.

Another significant category of considerations in arriving at the wage contract was presented beyond the matter-of-fact statement of the principle in *Rerum Novarum*. Pius XI made it clear that important ele-

ments like the "state of the business" (72) and the "requirements of the common good" (78) needed to be considered in arriving at the just wage. Nevertheless bad management of the business was deemed not acceptable as an excuse to deny workers such a wage; so in the final analysis an enterprise may not continue to operate simply by virtue of denying them a just wage. At the same time, all are warned that, "a scale of wages too low as well as a scale excessively high causes unemployment" (74). Ultimately *the common good* is a decisive consideration here, and also in bringing about the social conditions in which the just wage can be paid to all adult workers. That was made clear in the significant statement that is indeed magisterial in tone: "If in the present state of society this is not always feasible, *social justice demands that reforms be introduced without delay which will guarantee every adult working-man just such a wage*" (71, italics added).

There has been much "delay" since that was written in 1931, not to mention some retrogression, so that it is still a long way from universal fulfillment! To cite just a few examples: our vast retail shopping complexes, as well as our entire nationwide fast food service industry, along with the countless people in health care who perform the essential work at the sub-professional level, all operate largely on the basis of injustice toward an underclass of low-wage workers. Add the vast army of chronically underpaid agricultural workers left to compete with immigrants who, because they are here illegally, cannot protest against their enforced poverty. Nor are even highly skilled and professional workers exempt from exploitation in the form of substandard pay. A recent deadly commercial airplane crash killing all 50 persons on-board was traced to the inexperience and probable fatigue of an under-trained and underpaid crew. Also, it is widespread practice in academia to hire at low pay undue numbers of aspiring college faculty as so-called "adjunct professors," in order to avoid the higher salaries paid to so-called "tenure-track" and tenured faculty.

Much of that has, of course, been made more possible since married women were "emancipated" from home and motherhood — an eventuality stemming in part from the prowess of "Rosie the Riveter" during World War II. Another push in that direction came from the line of thinking presented in a little noticed work — *On the Emancipation of Women* — by Lenin's wife, N.K. Krupskaya, in 1934, (first translated into English in 1965). Since then, management of the



household, the original meaning of the word, *economics*, seems no longer to be regarded as a legitimate occupation. In that respect the capitalist and erstwhile Soviet societies grew to be more and more alike. Meanwhile, it is also undeniable that significant sectors of the work force in the United States, (e.g. in the construction, transportation, auto, and steel industries), and perhaps even more so in the economically advanced nations of Europe, nevertheless reached a wage status approximating what Leo XIII and his successors were advocating since 1891! This was accomplished largely through the activities of labor unions — also supported in papal encyclicals. Other features like government-provided family allowances along with universal health care, which is by now taken for granted in many countries, scarcely existed prior to *Rerum Novarum*.

Pius XI went on to suggest certain other initiatives that ventured beyond the basic and quintessential just wage requirement.

In the *present state of society*, however, We deem it *advisable* that the wage contract should, *when pos-*

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*sible*, be *modified* by a contract of partnership as is already being tried in various ways with significant advantage to both wage earners and employers. For thus the workers and executives become sharers in the ownership or management, or else participate in some way in the profits. (Q.A. 65. Italics are added here to indicate that such measures amount to prudential suggestions, and they are not requirements in justice like the basic wage itself. ).

These represent arrangements which, although far from commonplace, nevertheless have become frequent enough so that students who take courses in industrial relations or personnel administration typically learn about profit-sharing plans, management-sharing

plans, and employee stock-ownership plans (known by the acronym ESOP).

Although such initiatives are widely regarded as progressive endeavors if and where they are appropriate, they are by no means presented in papal teachings as replacements for the basic just wage. Indeed, over the course of time on the American labor relations scene one or the other of such plans was introduced for the thinly disguised purpose of discouraging labor union activity and the higher wages which that typically implies. Also, Pius XI had admonished in the prior paragraph (64) as “certainly in error ...those who hold that the wage contract is essentially unjust and that in its place must be introduced the contract of partnership...” And that is, among other things as he indicated, because his predecessor Leo XIII “...not only admits this contract, but devotes much space to its determination according to the principles of justice” (Q.A. 64).

Venerable Pope Pius XII who directly succeeded Pius XI found himself in the position where he had to warn certain enthusiastic forces in Austria, who were proposing that the workers had some kind of natural

right of co-ownership in the enterprises which employed them. Ostensibly such notions stemmed from passage of a law under the Adenauer-Erhard social market economy following World War II in West Germany. The *Mitbestimmungsrecht* (Co-determination Law) which was passed in 1951 provided that all corporations beyond a certain size must include a cer-

tain number of worker representatives on their boards of directors with a right to vote on important matters. Some drew the unwarranted conclusion that this meant workers have a *right* to co-ownership and therefore the *right* to share in managing the business enterprises where they were employed. Pius XII warned about such a notion, indicating that it could infringe on the private property right of the owners of the business.

Although he wrote no social encyclicals addressed specifically to the economic order, that Pontiff did write, speak, and teach profusely and profoundly about such matters during his pontificate (1939-1958). His many *Radio Addresses*, *Christmas Messages*,



etc. included innumerable significant references to the economic order. For example, an early specific appeal for the just wage appeared twice in the brief interval between December 1942 and June 1943 while World War II was raging in Europe. In his masterful *Christmas Message* of 1942 we find:

Those who are familiar with the great Encyclicals of Our predecessors and Our own previous messages know well that the Church does not hesitate to draw the practical conclusions which are derived from the moral nobility of work, and to give them all the support of her authority. These exigencies include, besides a just wage which covers the needs of the worker and his family, the conservation and perfection of a social order which will make possible an assured, even if modest, private property for all classes of society, which will promote higher education for the children of the working class who are especially endowed with intelligence and good will, which will promote the care and practice of the social spirit in one's immediate neighborhood, in the district, the province, the people and the nation, a spirit which, by smoothing over friction arising from privileges or class interests removes from workers the sense of isolation through the assuring experience of a genuinely human, and fraternally Christian solidarity.

Soon afterwards, on June 13, 1943 Pius XII told an assembly of workers gathered in Rome: "Our predecessors and We Ourselves have not lost any opportunity of making all men understand by Our repeated instructions your personal and family needs, proclaiming as fundamental prerequisites of social concord those claims which you have so much at heart: a salary which will cover the living expense of a family and such as to make it possible for the parents to fulfill their natural duty to rear healthily nourished and clothed children; a dwelling worthy of human persons; the possibility of securing for the children sufficient instruction and a becoming education; of foreseeing and forestalling times of stress, sickness and old age."

Clearly these were affirmations of the just wage principle as proposed earlier by Leo XIII and Pius XI.

And so was the restatement of it by Blessed John XXIII in *Mater et Magistra* (1961). That great Pope also lamented the fact that had presented itself in the period following World War II, when a "notable percentage of income is absorbed in building up an ill-conceived national prestige, and vast sums spent on armaments" (60). He perceived as another disorder in "economically developed countries" the fact that: "...relatively unimportant services, and services of doubtful value, frequently carry a disproportionately high rate of remuneration, while the diligent and profitable work of whole classes of honest, hard-working men gets scant reward" (70).

Pope Paul VI, under whose jurisdiction the Second Vatican Council was carried to its conclusion, presented just one social encyclical, *Populorum Progressio* (1967). In it his first priority was to extend the application of the *principle of solidarity*, i.e., the virtue of social charity, to the worldwide economy as it emerged after World War II. In addition, he authored the significant Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens* in 1971 addressed to the social order and marking the eightieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*. In *Populorum Progressio* he cited the just wage while making two important observations derived from what

**"a salary which will cover the living expense of a family and such as to make it possible for the parents to fulfill their natural duty to rear healthily nourished and clothed children. . ."**

Leo XIII had taught, and extending their application also to the "Freedom of trade." First: "...if the positions of the two contracting parties are too unequal, the consent of the parties does not suffice to guarantee the justice of their contract;" and second: "...an economy of exchange can no longer be based solely on the law of free competition, a law which in its turn too often creates an economic dictatorship" (59). This restriction pulled the rug from under the legitimacy of what he termed in *Octogesima Adveniens* — the "re-





newal of the liberal ideology” — what was later designated as “neoliberalism” by his successor Venerable John Paul II.

It was left to the great Polish Pope — a once aspiring actor — to present the just wage doctrine in its most dramatic terms. The full importance of his masterful trilogy of social encyclicals was not, and has even now not yet been fully appreciated. And that is, in this writer’s opinion, at least partly due to the ongoing attempt to revamp the discredited *old* liberalism of the British economists (Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, and eventually Alfred Marshall) into the aforementioned “neoliberalism” by the so-called *Austrian School* of economists Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich von Hayek and their enthusiastic followers. Their endeavor was partly in reaction against socialism and the short-lived success that the thinking of John Maynard Keynes succeeded in getting significant government oversight back into economic life during and directly after the Great Depression. Amid the widespread fear of socialism stemming in part from Soviet expansionism after World War II, Keynesian economic thinking too was regarded by many as thinly disguised socialism. That — even though Keynes was to a degree responsible for saving capitalism from itself not long after he had made the following statement: “For my part, I think that Capitalism, wisely managed can probably be made more efficient for attaining economic ends than any alternative system yet in sight...” That was clearly not true of the *laissez faire* approach to capitalism, as the economic crash in 1929 and the

Great Depression of the 1930’s proved soon afterwards — and as the Great Recession of 2008 has demonstrated once again at the present time! Largely overlooked was Keynes suggested alternative approach to *laissez faire*, which amounts also to an implicit acknowledgement of the *principle of subsidiarity*!

I believe that in many cases the ideal size for the unit of control and organization lies somewhere between the individual and the modern state. I suggest, therefore, that progress lies in the growth and recognition of semi-autonomous bodies within the State — bodies whose criterion of action within their own field is solely the public good as they understand it and from whose deliberations motives of private advantage are excluded. . . I propose a return, it may be said, towards mediaeval (*sic*) conceptions of separate autonomies.

Keynes was not a Roman Catholic, and probably not a religious person at all. What is more, the principle of autonomous *intermediate bodies* as proposed by Pius XI in *Quadragesimo Anno*, (82-87) — similar to the concept the British economist was proposing there—was unknown to him. That encyclical did not appear until several years (1931) after he wrote those words in 1926! To be sure the notion was promoted in the works of Heinrich Pesch (1854-1926) early in the century; but Keynes did not know German, nor is it likely that he — a consummate secularist— would have been interested in the works of an obscure Jesuit economist. It appears that what we have here instead is a *natural* concept — a common sense notion accessible to one and all — which is precisely what Pius XI indicated in *Quadragesimo Anno* (83).

For as *nature* induces those who dwell in close proximity to unite into municipalities, so those who practice the same trade or profession, economic or otherwise, constitute as it were fellowships or bodies. These groupings, autonomous in character, are considered by many to be, if not essential to civil society, at least a *natural* accompaniment thereof (83). (*Italics added*).

It should be noted that what the Pope, and Pesch whose central concepts he was using here, appeared to some to be suggesting was a return to medieval organizations— specifically merchant and craft guilds; and those were akin to what Keynes referred to as “mediaeval (*sic*) conceptions of separate autonomies.” Heinrich Pesch, as a matter of fact, opposed a return





to the guild *structure* which he considered unsuited for modern industrial society. He did urge the restoration of the underlying organizational *principle* which he saw as providing a form of *solidarity* at the occupational level. While this term for a control mechanism for economic life as such has largely dropped out of the discussion in recent papal social encyclicals, its essence remains under the designation “intermediate bodies.” That allows for greater adaptability to different cultures in the framework of modern economic life.

The *just wage principle*, however, most decidedly did not disappear from among the terms of discussion in the social teachings of the Catholic Church. When *Laborem Exercens* finally gets the attention it deserves as the successor “labor encyclical” to *Rerum Novarum*, the just wage doctrine may then also get some renewed careful study and emphasis with reference to contemporary conditions. In it, Pope John Paul II presented a decisive statement of its central importance in economic life, which, it appears, the powers-that-be in our flagging capitalist society have succeeded in burying completely! Seldom do we find so definitive a statement throughout the entire body of the Church’s teachings on the economic order as the man, now widely hailed as Pope John Paul II the Great, presented on this important matter. As if to make sure that no one mistook this as a lapse in his thinking, he repeated it in substance within the same section. In the 89th paragraph of Chapter 19 in *Laborem Exercens*, the one-time manual laborer in Polish quar-

ries wrote: “It should also be noted that the justice of the socio-economic system and, in each case, its just functioning deserve in the final analysis to be evaluated by the way in which man’s work is properly remunerated in the system.” What is more: “In every system regardless of the fundamental relationships within it between capital and labor, wages, that is to say remuneration for work, are still a practical means whereby the vast majority of people can *have* access to those goods which are intended for common use, both the goods of nature and manufactured goods.” That is followed by virtually a recapitulation of the first statement: “Hence, in every case, a just wage is the concrete means of verifying the justice of the whole socioeconomic system and, in any case, of checking that it is functioning justly” (89).

To understand the reference to “every system,” it must be noted that in 1981 when Pope John Paul presented *Laborem Exercens* he was still forced to defer to the historical fact that millions of workers in Eastern Europe and beyond were employed in socialist enterprises. The embarrassment for the Communist society lay in the fact that, in administering actual wage-payment systems, they had to sidestep the erroneous Marxian *labor theory of value*. According to that theory the workers should have been paid the whole price of the products they produced, since all exchange value according to Karl Marx was due to labor, with capital excluded, because he considered it as “dead past labor.” The new managers too — state capitalists in a sense — perceived the need to make allowance for the depreciation on existing capital, as well as for the kind of increase in capital investment that a growing economy requires.

To be sure, free market capitalism is equally shortsighted with its theories. Among other things, it leads the capitalist in his “free market” for labor to deny the workers the just wage which would enable them to purchase what they produce, therefore bringing on repeated breakdowns — referred to as *business cycles* — in the capitalist economy. It relies instead on such flawed notions as proposed by an early French economist aptly named Jean Baptiste Say (1767-1832). Say “baptized” a consoling theory proposing that whatever is produced gives rise automatically to its own equivalent income and therefore *demand*. Thus he concluded basically, and simplistically, that *supply creates its own demand*. Since economists were preoccupied in those days with discovering the “laws” of their infant sci-



ence, that came to be known as *Say's law of markets*. Implicit in the "law" is a notion of the kind of *general equilibrium* which became an overriding hallmark extending from classical into neoclassical economics until the present time. Historically, however, over the centuries countless businessmen have time and again been unable to sell all of what they produced, so that many did not survive the "short run" into the promised "long run." One problem was that too much of the income that resulted from creating the supply went to too few of its producers. Thus the workers were not paid enough to empower the kind of effective demand required to keep the process going. That is why Heinrich Pesch entitled his chapter on the just wage: *The Just Wage as the Economically Correct Wage*. All workers, who happen to make up the predominant majority of any economy, are entitled to a just wage for their work *if the economy is to perform as it is intended*. It is *intended* to provide the requisite goods and services for all — not an overabundance for a privileged few who happen to be in control of the economy by virtue of their ownership and control over capital. Thus what John Paul II had to say about the just wage from the standpoint of ethics and moral theology, had been affirmed by the same economist, Heinrich Pesch, who established the *principle of soli-*

where wages end up typically as the residual share after all other presumably more scarce and therefore more valuable (or more powerful!) factors of production derived their share. Given the ever-present assumption of free competition among workers for jobs, their wages would also end up being at the *subsistence* level for the simple reason that it could not go much lower *in the long run*! This kind of theorizing provided the point of entry for Keynes' blistering observation that "in the long run we are all dead," as it had previously for Marx whose hateful proposal would indeed come to cause the death of millions literally! In the real world where supply does not automatically create its own effective demand, the main factors in producing it — workers — need the means to purchase it, in other words, the just wage. This calls for a collective act of the will on the part of employers, since economic "laws" will not accomplish that automatically, as history has proven time and again.

As for the "laws" which economists have sought to discover and formulate from the beginnings of their science under the French Physiocrats, they frequently represent a chimera, along with the kind of *equilibrium* that economists have long talked about. It was precisely in his Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens*, his commemoration of *Rerum Novarum*, that Pope Paul VI presented an important discourse on *what he termed here the "human sciences"* (38-41). These are referred to typically as *social sciences*, and they include economics which is the one specifically under discussion in this papal Letter. The prominent issue here is the Pope's warning against "a renewal of the liberal ideology" which has at its root "an erroneous affir-

mation of the autonomy of the individual in his activity, his motivation, and the exercise of his liberty" (35). It was at this point that Pope Paul VI began referring to economics as a *human science*, indicating the kinds of laws economic activity is subject to for the most part. Human actions are indeed subject to the *moral natural* laws; but these are anything but automatic and predictable like the natural laws governing the movement of the planets through space and the makeup and rhythms of chemical and biological bodies. Human sciences like economics may therefore imply also the cultivation of virtues like justice and charity, and the avoidance of capital sins like avarice. That, once accomplished, can lead to a kind of harmony unlike the mechanistic general equilibrium which economists

## The Just Wage is the Economically Correct Wage.

*darity* as the appropriate governing principle for economic life.

Later, a Jesuit understudy of Pesch, who had played a leading role assisting Pope Pius XI in drafting the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, said the same thing in language to which contemporary economists would perhaps be more receptive. Writing twenty years after *Quadragesimo Anno* appeared, Oswald von Nell-Breuning proposed that once the "vocational order" was in place "...the determination of all economic parameters and the making of all other economically relevant decisions will aim at a wage and price system in which the wages are the cornerstone, the independent variable, in the system of wages and prices." That is quite another story than the free market economy





Adam Smith

development of their community; work that enables the worker to be respected and free from any form of discrimination, work that makes it possible for families to meet their needs and provide schooling for their children without the children themselves being forced into labour, work that permits the workers to organize themselves freely, and to make their voices heard; work that leaves enough room for rediscovering one's roots at a personal familial and spiritual level; work that guarantees those who have retired a decent standard of living (63).

envisioned. It is not something that will come about automatically; and it cannot be depicted by or programmed according to mathematical formulae!

And now the German Pope — heir to social teaching by Germanic pioneers like Bishop Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler, the Jesuit economist Heinrich Pesch, and other priests like Adolph Kolping, George Ratzinger, Franz Hitze, and Johannes Messner — did not miss the opportunity to once again reaffirm the just wage doctrine first presented by Pope Leo XIII. In his social encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI refers to “the right to a just wage and to the personal security of the worker and his or her family” (63). He links his treatment of the matter to an initiative by his immediate predecessor on May 1 in the year 2000. On a day which the Catholic Church expropriated from the Communists, Pope John Paul II had appealed for “a global coalition in favor of ‘decent work’” in support of “the strategy of the *International Labour Organization*.” Pope Benedict picked up on the word “decent” as used by the ILO in its program, in order to spell out once again what the just wage entails. In answer to the question, “What is meant by the word ‘decency’ in regard to work,” he writes:

It means work that expresses the essential dignity of every man and woman in the context of their particular society; work that is freely chosen, effectively associating workers, both men and women, with the

That description of *decent* regard for the worker and for work provides an appropriate 21<sup>st</sup> century update for the entire century-long discussion of the just wage for labor that began with Pope Leo XIII in 1891. It is significant that Pope Benedict, like his predecessor Pope John Paul II, cited the standard-bearing secular international authority on such matters, the *International Labor Organization*. This indicates that the matter being discussed transcends capitalism or socialism and even Catholicism for which he is the leading spokesman. It has to do with *the* natural law: not the kind of “natural laws” that some of the founding fathers of the economic science concocted in support of often dubious principles of their science, but the natural *moral* law. Pope Paul VI, in whose honor the Benedict XVI social encyclical was presented, had perceptively included economics among what he termed “human sciences,” thus implying that *human actions* are its object; and these are subject to the moral law. That *naturalness* also offers a hint as to why two of the most influential thinkers in the history of the economic science so divergent in their ideologies as Adam Smith and Karl Marx, along with the Jesuit economist Heinrich Pesch, whose influence is confined thus far to the social teachings of the Catholic Church since 1931, are nevertheless in basic agreement about the key importance of labor, i.e., human work, in the overall economic scheme.

Adam Smith opened his classic *Wealth of Nations* with the statement that: “The annual labour of every nation is the fund which originally supplies it with all of the necessities and conveniences of life which it annually consumes, and which consist always either in the immediate produce of that labour, or in what is purchased with that produce from other nations.” He then singled out what he called the *division of labor* in his first chapter as the major primordial boon to increasing the productivity of labor. By it he meant di-



viding tasks into their simplest operations with separate workers performing each of these. Thus each specialized producer became especially adept or skilled in the one particular simple task so that together the workers could turn out more efficiently and in greater quantities whatever they were engaged in producing. Smith employed the unpretentious example of a pin-making factory to illustrate his point. In doing so he actually indicated the basis for mass-production in modern industry characterizing in particular what came to be referred to later as the *Industrial Revolution*.

As is often the case, we find that what appears to be an original discovery on one's own part, the ancient Greek philosophers long ago presented very capably! For example, for Plato while searching for the origins of organized human society, i.e. the "State," the notion of specialized production in the form of separate crafts was already indicated. It came in response to his rhetorical question: "And will you have a work better done when the workman has many occupations or when he has only one?" In the elicited answer, "When he has only one," lay the sensible reply to *why* people

of a certain propensity in human nature, i.e. — "the propensity to truck and barter and exchange one thing for another.." The brilliant Scot may be forgiven that error — a frivolous one compared with his cynical demolition of the very notion of the *common good* later in his classic work.

Karl Marx stated his case for the primacy of labor in a far more flamboyant manner. For the bearded revolutionary all value stems from labor; and since the wages paid to labor — subsistence — amount to only a fraction of the value it produces — we get his scarcely dispassionate or scientific appraisal of how capital operates: "Capital is dead labour, that vampire-like only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks." Marx, like Smith, was guilty of his share of inconsistencies which may be attributed to the flawed premises that appear throughout his ponderous *Kapital*. For example, while all value is attributed to labor, it is difficult to reconcile this with his statement later in the same first volume: "Lastly nothing can have value, without being at the same time an object of utility." As the renowned Austrian economist Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk pointed out

in refuting Marx: pearls do not have value because pearl divers dive for them; they dive for them because there is something of great value at the other end! Yet it is hard to incite revolution with such commonplace economics.

The third less well-known but far wiser economist, from whose philosophical perspective Adam Smith and Karl Marx are even more

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eventually fell into the practice of specializing in production. They began to specialize in their work because it proved to be a more efficient way of satisfying their many wants. Adam Smith ventured the simplistic opinion that people fell onto the idea of specializing in production (division of labor), as a consequence

distant, also ranks labor — human work — in first place among the factors of production. After installing — "Man as Lord of the World According to God's Ordinance" in the very opening chapter of his *Lehrbuch*, he follows that immediately with three successive parts of that chapter: Work as the Means to Ex-



ercise Dominion Over the World; The Service Provided by Our Natural Environment; and Man as Lord of the World Within the Framework of Society. The second volume presents a comparison of his proposed *Solidaristic System Of Human Work*, with other economic systems. These include what he cites as *Adam Smith's Individualistic System of Industry*, as well as *Marxian Socialism and Plans for a Collectivist Society*. Once again, for the context of the solidarist system we find: *The Working Human Person as the Principal Cause of the National Welfare*. Heinrich Pesch put human work in a class by itself because it alone among the factors of production is more than merely a factor of production: it is also the purpose for which all production takes place. That ultimately is why Pesch then identified the just wage for workers as the "economically correct wage." He recognized the work of human beings as at the top level of all productive activity and as the primary source of the wealth-creating process. Although he expressed due reverence for *nature* and its resources long before the word *ecology* became commonplace, he ranked human labor ahead of it, while treating *capital* as already a derivative of the other two factors. That represents the identical thinking expressed by Pope John Paul II in *Laborem Exercens* which provides a masterful theology of work. The Jesuit economist cited "the primacy of man in the production process" as "*the primacy of man over things*"(57), which brings us to the crux of our discussion of Pope Benedict XVI and his first social encyclical.

The economic collapse in 2008 revealed once again the serious underlying flaws that remain in the kind of plutocratic capitalism which has persisted into the 21<sup>st</sup> century in leading economies of the world, including the United States. It should at last bring to bear the important lesson that *political democracy*, i.e. the leveling of the at times absolute political power of royalty, which captured and preoccupied the attention of much of the world from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onward, was not the only aspect of democracy that is important for the genuine progress of the human race. At this point the German Pope reiterated the call of his Polish predecessor for "*economic democracy*"(66). In an address to business and labor union leaders assembled in Rome on May 2, 2000, Pope John Paul II had indicated that "...democracy, including economic democracy, must be safeguarded as must a correct con-

ception of the person and of society."

The political leveling that radiated from critical events, like the blood-drenched French Revolution and from the American Revolution, offered only a partial solution for the overall democratization of society which includes also an economic leveling process. The need for the latter has already provided the pretext for the deadliest of all revolutions — like ones in modern Russia and China — which ironically led back to the most despotic of all monarchies in human history! On the other hand, the Catholic Church which Blessed John XXIII designated as the "Mother and Teacher of nations" (*Mater et Magistra* 1) has been at work over the past century indicating how the economic leveling process can be accomplished moderately and equitably by payment of the just wage to all workers.

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## SIGNIFICANT AFFIRMATION

Now Pope Benedict XVI has once again included a significant affirmation of that doctrine in an encyclical motivated by the most recent economic crisis. Like the one addressed by Pope Pius XI in 1931, this one too was triggered by pervasive irresponsible social behavior along with certain perversions endemic to the financial sector of the economy. The severity and extent of both calamities laid bare the more deep-seated defects and imbalances in the economic system that have not yet been addressed definitively. These underlie what may well turn out to be the second and possibly final episode in the decline of plutocratic capitalism, which began in 1929!

The most recent economic collapse demonstrates, among other things, that the world cannot revert to the dismal stingy form of economy which allows a bare subsistence level of living for the great majority of people, who happen to be working human persons, alongside the amassing of immense fortunes by a privileged few on the basis of what they happen to own or control. The modern era has become the beneficiary of unprecedented potential wealth, first by an age of discovery and exploration which opened up the vast land areas with all of their resources that lay beyond the horizons of the known world since time immemorial. Afterwards, again providentially, came the era which historians refer to, perhaps too narrowly, as the *Industrial Revolution*. It could be designated more



appropriately as the *Technological Revolution* that is ongoing, since it has moved far beyond what was understood narrowly by the term, *industry*. The spread of innovative technical genius came to revolutionize also the ever-important agricultural sector, as well as transportation, and unfortunately also warfare! The more recent cybernetic revolution involving the use and transmission of knowledge and information continues, bringing about radical changes in the lives of human beings beyond what our forefathers could have imagined as possible! The great wealth which our world with its modern revolutionary technology is capable of producing is ordained, however, to be shared in modest proportions by all people, not cornered swinishly by a few. Unless the fruit of the hyper-productivity which all of that makes possible is spread widely to include also what were traditionally the poorest sectors of society, we are chronically susceptible to economic implosions like the one which began in 1929 and the recent collapse in 2008, along with the kinds of social upheaval to which such episodes may lead!

It is likely that the *economic democracy* to which Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI refer in this new millennium will emerge eventually. It can come following a brutal siege of the "economic dictatorship" as Pope Paul warned in *Populorum Progressio* (59) in 1967. Or it can come peacefully by the widespread acceptance and application of principles which the Catholic Church has been presenting in its social teachings since 1891. These involve first and foremost the widespread acknowledgement and application of the twin virtues having the *common good* as their object — *social justice and social charity* — that Pope Pius XI presented in 1931 as the guiding principles for economic life. Social charity was identified clearly by Pope John Paul II sixty years later in *Centesimus Annus* (10) as *the principle of solidarity*, which he had explained in detail some four years previously in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (38-45). *Basically it involves a general recognition of the interdependence that exists at all levels of society, from the domestic family to the family of nations, along with a willingness to act in accordance with and for the furtherance of the greater good which can stem from that interdependence.*



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# REVIEWS

## Probing History

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**GODFREY KURTH, *THE CHURCH AT THE TURNING POINTS OF HISTORY* (NORFOLK, VA: GATES OF VIENNA BOOKS, 2007) \$14.95, 126 PP., PAPER.**

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**DIANE MOCZAR, *TEN DATES EVERY CATHOLIC SHOULD KNOW: THE DIVINE SURPRISES AND CHASTISEMENTS THAT SHAPED THE CHURCH AND CHANGED THE WORLD* (MANCHESTER, NH: SOPHIA INSTITUTE PRESS, 2005) \$13.95, 177 PP., PAPER.**

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"In the history of mankind considered as a whole there are two grand divisions," writes Godfrey Kurth to introduce *The Church at the Turning Points of History*. "On the one hand, there is the ancient world seated in the darkness of death; on the other hand, the modern world which advances in the light of the Gospel. This is, beyond compare, the greatest fact of history."

Kurth writes not from the crimped secular perspective so typical of modern historians, but instead looks for the eternal and the transcendent. In this, of course, he is not alone. In Christ's tomb, Chesterton observed in *The Everlasting Man*, "the whole of that great and glorious humanity which we call antiquity was gathered up and covered over; and in that place it was buried. It was the end of a very great thing called human history; the history that was merely human."

The "Christian era," Kurth explains, "opens the annals of a new

creation and a new humanity." Christian civilization and ancient society are based on "essentially opposed" principles. "The two societies differ in their respective conception of life and the solution they

give to the problem of existence." Antiquity offered transient pleasure "summed up in two words: idleness and voluptuousness," which "could be the lot of but a small minority. If a man lives without work, he forces others to work for him. If he lives for pleasure, it is necessary for him to have an army

of people who will furnish him amusement." Christianity offers happiness that is eternal union with God. "The happiness of the pagan is not possible without the corresponding misery of the majority of the human race. The Christian cannot be truly happy unless he makes as many as possible of his fellow men participate in his happiness. ... In principle, a Christian society is a society of brothers, just as in principle, a pagan society is a society of slaves." Indeed, the contrast between paganism and Catholicism is so stark that Chesterton called paganism "the one real rival to the Church of Christ."

The Incarnation, Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ is the pivot point of history. We measure time as the temporal distance from Christ, despite modern obscurant efforts to adopt the term Common Era and the abbreviations C.E. and

**"They saw in the Church a synagogue of superior order . . . into which no one could enter without being a member either by birth or by adoption by the people of Israel."**

B.C.E, which themselves nevertheless still use Christ as the pivot point.

The Church, Kurth notes, "has received charge to teach all nations ... and with regard to this duty, every man has the right to call her to account." So, Kurth defines his task: "How has the Church ful-





filled her mission? ... Has she been, has she truly remained, that universal and indefectible society that contains within itself all civilization, or would she be merely one of those fleeting forms, in which, at a given moment, the human race embodied its ever changing aspirations?"

The first test came swiftly, and Kurth's retelling of it is direct and vivid.

The great obstacles, or rather, the chief danger that the Church encountered in her first years lay in her ignorance of the attitude to be assumed concerning the Ancient Law and Israel. The lapse of time has solved this problem clearly and with precision, and now it is within the grasp of a child. There is nothing now in common between Israel rejected, shut up within her synagogue, and the people of God gathered about the Church. But it was quite different when the Church came into being. Far from considering Israel as the

people of reprobation, the Christians, one and all — the apostles at their head — continued to regard the Jews as the people of God. Being Jews themselves and holding fast to the Law of Moses, they saw in Christianity the complement of the Law and in the Church the consummate flower that came forth to crown the fertile root of Jesse.

And how could they have believed otherwise?

Godfrey Kurth, a Belgian Catholic historian who authored more than 20 books and contributed more than a dozen articles to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, was a professor at the State University of Liège and Secretary of the Belgian Historical Society in Rome. Based on a series of lectures he delivered at the end of the nineteenth century, *The Church at the Turning Points of History*, does not suffer from recent confusions that so thoroughly obscure things which formerly were within the grasp of a child that

now even some members of the Church's hierarchy seem incapable of comprehension.

"This does not mean that this Christian Church of Jewish nationality wished to close her doors to Gentiles," Kurth continues. "On the contrary, she dreamed of gathering within her embrace all the people of the earth, in order to comply with the demand of Christ." The Jews saw themselves as "the circle of the elite; ... the race marked forever with a sign of predilection, the priestly tribe which stood as the intermediary between God and man." The first Christians carried this "Jewish viewpoint ... with them into Christianity. They saw in the Church a synagogue of superior order to which God had revealed the obscure meaning of the prophecies, but a synagogue nevertheless into which no one could enter without being a member either by birth or by adoption by the people of Israel."

"Now then, I ask," Kurth asks rhetorically, "was this really the way to bring nations to embrace the Gospel — to oblige them to give up their nationality as well as their religion?" Were first century Greeks and Romans eager to become Jews? Would Pope Benedict XVI's Anglican prelature stand any chance of succeeding if Australian or American or English Episcopalians were told that they first had to become Italians or Germans in order to become Catholics? "Here we see how Israel by her pretensions to leadership in the kingdom of God hindered the propagation of the Gospel. So long as Israel stood between the Savior and the human race, the human race was bound to keep away from the Savior."





Peter's vision, recounted in Acts 10:9-20, "is the divine solution of the irritating problem;" it "announces that the ancient law is no longer binding on the Christians, and that consequently one can be a Christian without being a Jew." And thus, "In vain then does Israel promise herself the first place in the kingdom of God. Israel can disappear without causing a vacancy; her mission is ended and her place henceforth will be taken by a spiritual Israel made up of all the faithful."

Peter's vision and his baptism of Cornelius and his family, however, did not by itself immediately precipitate a dramatic change. "Those Christians who put their Jewish patriotism above their Christian faith did not give up their favorite idea concerning the privilege of Israel. This doctrine was part, so to speak, of their flesh and blood; it was one of the constituent elements of their faith; it was identified in their thoughts with the Christian doctrine. They seemed to have let the baptism at Caesarea

pass as a miraculous exception, not as a rule."

Then, from Antioch, came the news that Gentile converts were receiving baptism without any other initiation or the imposition of Jewish practices. "And to make it clear that they meant to inaugurate a new tradition and break with the past, they were taking a name never before in use among the faithful, a name that had been recently coined at Antioch: they were calling themselves Christians!"

Now, "the scandal was great. ... they were abolishing the privilege of Israel. ... Were these innovators to triumph it would be a seeming abandonment of the Christians of the first hour who formed the nucleus of the faithful and among whom were the most devoted disciples of Christ; to say the least it would be for them a very bitter humiliation." The Church's first Council, the Council of Jerusalem, resolved the dispute: "It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay no further burden upon you than the necessary

things." As Pope Benedict XVI noted in *Jesus of Nazareth*, "A literal application of Israel's social order to the people of all nations would have been tantamount to a denial of the universality of the growing community of God."

"The Council of Jerusalem had saved Christianity," Kurth says, "but it had sacrificed Judaism. In deciding that the Church would be Catholic, that is international, it had killed the national pretensions of the Jewish clique." Some of the Jewish Christians resisted, but "the catastrophe in which Jerusalem perished some years later drowned their opposition in a deluge of blood and was, to the Christian Jews, a decisive revelation which came to confirm that of Joppe [where Peter had his vision]. After this it was plain that Israel was no longer the chosen people of God but a rejected nation."

So complete was this rejection of Israel, thought Kurth, that "it is no longer worth while to fix upon it the attention of history." This is a bit of overstatement, or at least somewhat ambiguous. While Israel is no longer at the center of salvation history, and indeed, has been supplanted by the New Israel that is The Church, E. Michael Jones demonstrates in *The Jewish Revolutionary Spirit and Its Impact on World History* that continuing Jewish antipathy to Christ and His Church throughout history cannot be ignored without peril.

Kurth thus labels the Council of Jerusalem "first turning point in the history of the modern world." At it, the Church "separated her cause from the precarious destiny of a nation [and] refused to espouse the cause of the petty con-



tingencies of history so as not to fail in her universal mission." Frank Sheed and Masie Ward insisted that Kurth's treatment of the Council was a source that "must be used" by Catholic Evidence Guild lecturers on the Church and Judaism.

In *Ten Dates Every Catholic Should Know*, Diane Moczar "tried" to "present ten significant dates ... around which the reader can group the main themes of the history of Christendom." The dates "represent extremely handy 'pegs' on which to hang the major developments of Catholic history."

Moczar begins after the apostolic era with a dramatic retelling of the story of Constantine and the events leading to the Edict of Milan, "the great charter of liberation of the Catholic Church," in 313 A.D., and its aftermath. "So,

also establishing that "the destiny of Europe was not to be a province of Asia." Soon thereafter, with the baptism of Clovis in 496, France was born: "The conversion of the Franks proved to be of enormous importance for the future of Catholic Europe. Catholicism was no longer the weak and inferior religion of the conquered. It was plain to pagans and Arians alike that the God of the Catholics was far stronger than theirs, since he gave his followers such spectacular victories. On this barbaric habit of thought the Church was able to build." From there, it's on to 800 A.D. and the Crowning of Charlemagne, "protector of Rome, unifier of Europe, and Father of Western Christendom. It is hard to think how Catholic Europe would have emerged from the Dark Ages without him."

**"A literal application of Israel's social order to the people of all nations would have been tantamount to a denial of the universality of the growing community of God."**

was the period following the Edict of Milan a utopia for the Church? Far from it." Christianity would become the official religion of the Roman Empire, "but the empire was doomed." So, in 452, Pope St. Leo staves off the Huns, refuting the claim that the barbarians were an admonition for substituting Christ for the Roman gods and

Kurth also addresses Constantine's conversion, the fall of Rome, and the baptism of Clovis, all in a single chapter that stresses the universality of Catholicism. Kurth emphasizes the attraction of the "sweet yoke of Christ," rather than the attraction of a "stronger" God who delivered "spectacular victories."

"Rome, in the language of its pagan worshipers, was called the Eternal City, and Christianity in borrowing this appellation from the civil language, did not wish, at least in the beginning, to modify its traditional sense," Kurth writes. Indeed, he notes, early Christian apologists pointed to their belief in the eternity of the Roman Empire as proof of their patriotism. "Just as the Christian Jews were firmly convinced that the future of Christianity was indissolubly united with the future of their own people, so the Christian Romans imagined that their future was one with the future of the Empire." But the Church "understood her role better ... if she had not risen above the resentments of blind patriotism, Christianity would not have survived, but would have sunk into the abyss along with the Roman Empire." Citing Augustine, St. Gregory the Great, and others, Kurth writes, "the Catholic Church unlocked the gates of her sanctuaries and opened the road of salvation to the new nations. Thus is explained her prodigious success during the sixth century with the Barbarians, whether Arian or pagan. When these became convinced that they could carry the sweet yoke of Christ without submitting to the heavy yoke of Rome, their prejudices against the Catholic Faith fell to the ground, and its natural superiority over heresy, as well as over paganism, found no longer any obstacle."

Others, including Moczar, compare the baptism of Clovis to that of Constantine, but Kurth maintains that, "it matches in a remarkable way, the baptism of the centurion Cornelius."



Then, the Church, separating her cause from that of the people of Israel, had gone to the nations and received them into the Christian community without imposing upon them the obligations of the Judaic Law. This time, detaching her destinies from those of the Empire, she went to the Barbarians and put into their hands the scepter of the world without requiring them to wear the dress of the Roman civilization. On both occasions it was a stroke of strategy of the same superior order. On both occasions, Christianity, the common patrimony of all humanity, had escaped utter destruction. Instead of weeping on the graves of extinct civilizations, Christianity had busied herself with winning to the faith of Christ the nascent communities. She had thus indicated in a precise and explicit manner, and for all centuries to come, that, as she is created to spread the kingdom of God on earth, she cannot identify herself with any of those ephemeral things which are called dynasty, nation, social class, civilization.

As Chesterton observed, Christianity has "died many times and risen again; for it had a God who knew the way out of the grave." Or, to bastardize Belloc's famous aphorism, Europe is not the Faith, and the Faith is not Europe. The Faith will not perish but, quoting Belloc, "Europe will return to the Faith, or she will perish." The Catholic churches in Europe may all become museums, but the Catholic Church itself will never become a museum or a museum piece.

Professor Kurth's turning points of history also include the Church's

escape from lay investiture in the feudal period, neo-Cesarism's dissolution of Christian republics and the consequent end of the Crusades, the Church and the Renaissance, and the Church and the French Revolution. "The evil of the Revolution is its pretension to treat political society as if it were the creation of pure reason, inde-

pendent of the action of the divine laws which rule the life of the world and of humanity." Moczar includes Cluny, the Protestant "catastrophe," Lepanto, and Fatima among the surprises and chastisements that shaped the Church and shaped the world. Moczar's book is a more popular treatment; Kurth's is a deeper probe.

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**JAMES G. BRUEN, JR.**

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### LETTERS, CONT'D FROM P. 7

The numbers are those of the bombers engaged. An asterick (\*) means: US Airforce. No asterick: RAF. (British). The following bombing attacks occurred during that time of the "uprising": July 31\*, 1944: München (567 bombers);, Ludwigshafen (447 bombers); August 4\*, 1944, Hamburg, Bremen (256);, Peenemünde, Anklam, (425); Kiel, Wismar, Rostock, Schwerin (446 Bombers); August 6\*, 1944 Brandenburg (269);, Berlin (154);, Hamburg (445);, August 12/13, 1944, Braunschweig (379);, Rüsselheim (250);, August 16./17. 1944 Stettin (461 Bombers, 1150 deaths); August 18./19. 1944 Bremen (288 Bombers, 1058 deaths); August 26./27. 1944 Königsberg (372 + 189 Bombers); August 29./30. 1944 Königsberg, (189 Bombers and 4200 deaths); August 29./30. 1944 Stettin, (402 Bombers, 3,606 deaths); September 8\*, 1944 Ludwigshafen (348);, Kassel (386);, Karlsruhe (247); September 11./12. 1944 Darmstadt (226 Bombers, 8433 deaths); (9/11/1944!); September

27\*. 1944, Köln (421);, Ludwigshafen (214 Bombers);, Kassel (248); October 5, 1944 Wilhelmshaven (227);, Köln (248\*);, Lippstadt (175\*);, Münster (235);.

The list of all the German cities suffering saturation bombings from 70 to 635 heavy bombers each time between July 31 and October 5, 1944 follows: Anklam, Bielefeld, Braunschweig, Brandenburg, Berlin, Bremen, Bremerhaven, Darmstadt, Delitsch, Dessau, Dortmund, Düsseldorf, Emden, Eisennach, Frankfurt/M, Fulda, Fürth, Gaggenau, Gelsenkirchen, Halle/S, Hamburg, Hamm, Hannover, Heilbronn, Kaiserslautern, Karlsruhe, Kassel, Kiel, Koblenz, Köln, Königsberg, Köthen, Limburg, Ludwigshafen, Magdeburg, Mannheim, Mainz, Merseburg, Mönchengladbach, München, Münster, Neuss, Nürnberg, Osnabrück, Penemünde, Pirmasens, Pölit, Rechlin, Rheydt, Rostock, Rositz, Rüsselsheim, Saarbrücken, Sckkeuditz, Schwäbisch Hall,



Schwerin, Sindelfingen, Stettin, Stuttgart, Ulm, Unna, Weimar, Wiesbaden, Wilhelmshaven, Wismar, Zuffenhausen.

Conclusion: These are the 66 cities and towns suffering saturation bombings, and mostly phosphorus bombings, in a two months time period only. These lists could be expanded from May 12, 1940 to May 2, 1945. Only the Germans and the Japanese know what "phosphorus bombings" means.

During the two months time of the Warsaw Uprising Poland's Anglo-American friends, their Allies in the annihilation of Germany, sent 31,652 large bombers for the destruction of these 66 German new and "ancient" cities. Germany did not even have the type of bombers which could do something as the destruction of so many towns. Therefore, there is really no reason for Poles to complain about the fate of Warsaw. It is not known that any Polish politician or Polish Cardinal or Polish Bishop ever ask their allied friendly governments to stop the unrelenting bombing of German cities, in most cases the heavy-populated inner cities.

References: 1) Richard C. Lukas: *Forgotten Holocaust — The Poles under German Occupation 1939 — 1944*. University Press of Kentucky, 1986. Page 68, 93. 2) *Junge Freiheit*: Nr. 8/03, 14. Februar 2003, Berlin: Sonderbeilage: "Der Tod fiel vom Himmel — 1940-1945, Schicksale im Bombenkrieg." 3) Victor Suvorov: *The Chief Culprit — Stalin's Grand Design to Start World War II*. Naval Institute Press, 2008. Page 108.

Otward Mueller  
LTEMueller@aol.com

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## POLAND AS VICTIM

I find the continuing discussion on Polish-German history in *Culture Wars* to be of great interest. I was nurtured on the "the Poland as Victim theme" so it is enlightening to hear the German side. My grandmother often told me that she was forced to speak German in school and was smacked if she said anything in Polish. She told me, that since she was quite sickly as a teen, [her nickname was *Zdechłona*, the dead one—she lived to 89!] the German taskmaster would have her sing as the rest of the workers hoed sugar beets in harmony with her singing. Reminded me of the gandy dancers on rail laying crews. My paternal grandparents were from Inowroclaw area in Pomerania.

I once attended nightly Polish history classes given by a Prof. Whooley from Ripon College. He touched on the struggle between the German settler farmers and the Polish farmers who gloated as the German farmers didn't understand the local soil conditions and had a hard time growing good crops. This was during the Bismarckian era as best as I can remember. However, I don't think prior ethnic cleansing justifies later ethnic cleansing. I am always saddened by fact of the reservationing of the American Indian peoples and the forcible separation of their children into white run schools.

I recalled reading that the Polish Ambassador to the US, Count Potocki, warned the Polish government that President Roosevelt was trying to foment a European war in the late '30s and that Pope Pius XI tried to arrange a European

peace conference but the US urged Poland to boycott or undermine the efforts. To their credit, Hitler and Mussolini agreed almost immediately.

Florian Zalewski  
fzalews@charter.net

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## WHITE CHRISTMAS SUBVERSION , CONT'D FROM P. 9

mity of centuries? Is anyone really dishonored by this? If schlockified Christianity is Christianity cleansed of Jew hatred, then three cheers for schlock. If supplanting Jesus Christ with snow can enable my people to cozy up to Christmas, then let it snow, let it snow, let it snow!

The Church has often baptized pagan holidays, transfusing them with Christian meaning and transforming them into Catholic holydays. Today's crusade to drain holydays of Christian meaning and transform them into feel-good commercial events renounces that baptism. And that crusade marches to the music of Jewish genius, which has made the most essential contribution of all to the creation of America's schlockified Christianity.

May you have a happy and holy Christmas.

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JAMES G. BRUEN, JR.



# Bullets

\* Mohammed is now the favorite name for newborn boys in England and Wales.

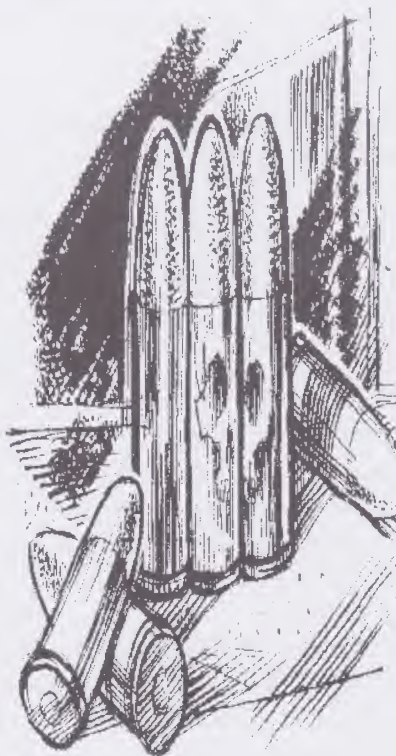
\* Rejecting Truth. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg refuses to attend the annual Red Mass marking the start of the Court's term. "I went one year, and I will never go again, because this sermon was outrageously anti-abortion," she says in *Stars of David: Prominent Jews Talk About Being Jewish*.

\* Honoring the Immoral. British embryologist Robert Edwards received the 2010 Nobel Prize in Medicine for developing clinical in vitro fertilization by which about four million test tube babies are now living, while countless others were discarded, *i.e.*, killed. Next they'll give the Peace Prize to a man waging two wars. Oh, wait; they did that last year.

\* Asked to write for *Fidelity*, Joe Sobran insisted on advocating legalized homosexuality, so his piece never ran. Perhaps the wrecked career he later suffered over his refusal to genuflect to Israel benefited him spiritually. He received the Church's last rites, and his Tridentine Requiem Mass was beautiful. *Requiescat in pace*.

\* Mini-Review: *Roads to Rome* by John Beaumont (St. Augustine's Press, \$55). Brief bios of hundreds of post-Reformation British and Irish converts, explaining why each embraced the faith. Very timely given the Pope's visit to Britain and the beatification of England's most famous convert.

\* In a Tzomet Institute study, Illicit Sex for the Sake of National Security, Israeli Rabbi Ari Schvat blesses honey-pots — female Mossad agents having sex to further the spy agency's mission.



Queen Esther, a Jew, slept with a Persian king to save her people, he notes. "If it is necessary to use a married woman, it would be best [for] her husband to divorce her," he says. "After the [sex] act, he would be entitled to bring her back." We hope this isn't what's meant by the ambiguous phrase "Judeo-Christian heritage."

\* When Dems accused GOP congressional candidate Jesse Kelly of "Nazi ties" due to an anti-immigration group's endorsement, campaign manager Adam Kwasman was furious: "As a practicing Jew, I am absolutely disgusted," adding there's a "special place in hell" for those who allege anti-Semitism.

\* "In 2007, I gladly defended Father [Robert] Sirico against an attack ... in *Culture Wars*," says the Catholic League's Bill Donohue while blasting a *National Catholic Reporter* blogger for being "highly critical" of Fr. Sirico, the president of the Acton Institute. For Bill, the issue is "Sirico's gay activist years before he became a priest." He's unconcerned that Fr. Sirico's still

**JAMES G. BRUEN, JR.**

E-Mail: [cwbullets@yahoo.com](mailto:cwbullets@yahoo.com)

subverting Church teaching by hawking libertarian economics. Sodomy and withholding laborers' wages are both sins that cry to heaven for vengeance.

\* Unusual Clarity. At a press conference ending the Synod of Bishops for the Middle East, Melkite Greek Catholic Archbishop Cyrille Salim Bustros said: "The Holy Scriptures cannot be used to justify the return of Jews to Israel and the displacement of the Palestinians, to justify the occupation by Israel of Palestinian lands," adding, "We Christians cannot speak of the 'promised land' as an exclusive right for a privileged Jewish people. This promise was nullified by Christ. There is no longer a chosen people — all men and women of all countries have become the chosen people."

\* The Usual Misrepresentation. AJC Rabbi David Rosen shrieked: "The comments of Archbishop Bustros reflect either shocking ignorance or insubordination in relation to the Catholic Church's teaching on Jews and Judaism flowing from the Vatican II declaration *Nostra Aetate*. That declaration affirms the eternal covenant between God and the Jewish People, which is inextricably bound up with the Land of Israel." If the rabbi's read *Nostra Aetate*, he's a fool or a liar, maybe both.

\* "We urge the Vatican to issue a clear repudiation of Archbishop Bustros's outrageous and regressive comments," blustered Rabbi Rosen. Don't hold your breath, rabbi.

\* Why would any Catholic look to an AJC rabbi to explain Church teaching?

\* Have a happy and holy Christmas.



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